Appendix P. Kings Beach Commercial Core Improvements Visual Resources/Aesthetics Assessment

NORTH TAHOE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT ***Duane L. Whitelaw, Fire Chief***

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11-1-07
Ken Grehm
Director of Public Works
County of Placer
3091 County Center Drive, Suite 220
Auburn, CA 95604

SUBJECT: KINGS BEACH COMMERCIAL CORE ALTERNATIVES

Dear Mr. Grehm,

I have been asked once again to provide input on the above highway alternatives in Kings Beach. My comments are based on attending some of the community meetings and having had the opportunity to discuss the project with Sheriff's Department Captain Jeff Granum. In fact Capt. Granum and I were provided a separate meeting to review and comment on project alternatives.

Prefacing my remarks, this Fire District is not a planning agency. We do not see ourselves as an agency that evaluates the value, socio-economic or otherwise, of any project against the potential for more traffic delays. The District's primary concern with any project review is delivery of service. In this case I'm referring to fire engines and paramedic ambulances getting to the scene of an emergency as quickly and safely as possible. Life safety is always our number one concern followed by protection of property and the environment.

In reviewing the most recent preferred alternatives for Kings Beach, I don't see either alternative as cause for concern. Red lights and sirens are typically needed and traffic usually yields the right of way to emergency responders. Downtown Tahoe City in many respects mimics the one alternative and in the 15 years I've been responding from the Tahoe City fire station it has never been a serious problem. Even on peak holidays, so long as the center turn lane remains open, the Fire District isn't constrained from responding. I've discussed roundabouts with my colleagues with Truckee Fire District and don't hear of problems. The bottom line is if emergency vehicles are to get through traffic, stopped vehicles must have room to pull over.

There is no question that traffic can slow our response in some respect. We just don't feel it is our job to weigh that impact against what other agencies and the public envisions for the community.

One other point should be mentioned. There is no clear understanding, at least in my mind, what the long term commercial build-out of Kings Beach will look like. District vehicles, particularly fire engines, need to have room to set up operations on Highway 28. The preference is to do this without shutting down traffic. With the discussion of changes to height of structures, fire operations may need to stage farther from buildings in bicycle or traffic lanes causing potential traffic flow impacts.

Feel free to contact me with any questions.

Regards,

Duane L. Whitelaw
Fire Chief

Cc Dan LaPlante
Fire District Board of Directors

Kings Beach Commercial Core Improvements
Visual Resources/Aesthetics Assessment

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

Caltrans	California Department of Transportation
CCIP	Commercial Core Improvement Project
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CIPs	Capitol Improvement Projects
Code	TRPA Code of Ordinances
Community Plan	Kings Beach Community Plan
Corps	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
County General Plan	El Dorado County General Plan
DFG	California Department of Fish and Game
EIPs	Environmental Improvement Programs
EIR	environmental impact report
ESCC	Environmental Standards Carrying Capacity
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
KBCC	Kings Beach Commercial Core
LOS	Level of Service
MDB&M	Mount Diablo Baseline and Meridian
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
RWQCB	Regional Water Quality Control Board
SEZ	stream environment zones
SQIP	Scenic Quality Improvement
SQIP	Scenic Quality Improvement Program
SR	State Route
TART	Tahoe Area Regional Transit
TRPA	Tahoe Regional Planning Agency

Kings Beach Commercial Core Improvements

Visual Resources/Aesthetics Assessment

Proposed Project

Introduction

The Kings Beach Commercial Core Improvement Project (CCIP) is located in the community of Kings Beach, which is situated along the north shore of Lake Tahoe in Placer County, California. The boundaries for the project area include Chipmunk Street to the east; State Route (SR) 267 to the west; along the northern edge running diagonally west to east from Rainbow to Minnow Avenue; and along the shoreline of Lake Tahoe, south of SR 28. Specifically, the CCIP is located in portions of the Northeast quarter of Section 13, Township 16 North, Range 17 East, Mount Diablo Baseline and Meridian (MDB&M), and the West half of Section 19, Township 16 North, Range 18 East, MDB&M (Figure 1). The project area contains both residential and commercial properties, and receives high vehicular and pedestrian traffic year-round.

As currently proposed, elements of the CCIP include roadway improvements to SR 28 to accommodate anticipated future transit and pedestrian needs; the installation of sidewalks, curbs and gutters, and storm drain facilities at specific locations; drainage ditch lining and revegetation at specific locations; streetscaping; the designation of specific road sites as on-street parking; and the construction of new, off-street parking lots at specific locations within the project area. There are currently five alternatives being considered for the improvements to SR 28.

This visual assessment report has been prepared to analyze visual impacts associated with the proposed construction of the Kings Beach CCIP in Kings Beach, Placer County, California. The document was prepared for the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) to comply with standards contained in the Tahoe Regional Plan; for Placer County and the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to comply with standards contained in the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA); and for the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to comply with standards contained in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The TRPA is the lead agency responsible for certification of the document pursuant to its Regional Plan, while Placer County is the lead agency responsible for certification of the document pursuant to CEQA. The FHWA will review the document to ensure NEPA requirements are

met in regards to the proposed improvements (five alternatives) to SR 28. Caltrans is a cooperating agency for reviewing the document for adequacy in terms of the proposed improvements to SR 28 under both CEQA and NEPA.

Construction is scheduled for April to September 2007, and April to September 2008.

Project Background

Historically, Kings Beach has been one of the primary commercial and recreational centers in the Lake Tahoe Basin. SR 28 extends through the Kings Beach commercial area, which is generally defined as extending from the SR 267 intersection at the western boundary to the intersection of SR 28 and Chipmunk Street at the eastern boundary. Land uses are predominantly tourist/recreational and commercial.

Over the years, land use development in Kings Beach has been influenced by the nature of its original subdivision. The 1926 "Brockway Vista" subdivision map laid out rectangular lots in a typical grid system. Many of the lots are small, measuring 7.6 meters (24.934 feet) in width and 38.1 meters (125.0 feet) in depth. This lay out has resulted in a large number of small structures confined by parcel width.

Originally constructed as a two-lane Forest Reserve road in the early 1930s, SR 28 cuts somewhat diagonally through the subdivision. Parcels in blocks adjacent to the highway are located perpendicular to the road and slightly askew from parcels and blocks in the remainder of the community. The limited width of the roadway allowed for roadside parking and an adequate setback between the roadway and adjacent buildings. During the 1960s, the roadway was expanded to four lanes through the commercial core area. The additional lanes were provided at the expense of the setback between buildings and the road. Roadside parking also was affected. During peak summer periods, there is a shortage of available parking in portions of the commercial core area. In addition, pedestrian crossing of the highway was made more difficult.

Placer County and the TRPA adopted the Kings Beach Community Plan in 1996. That plan presents a vision intended to guide community enhancement activities. Major components of the Community Plan are directed at the commercial core. These include reconstruction of SR 28, providing improved pedestrian and bicyclist facilities, the installation of streetscape improvements, and the construction of water quality improvements.

The intent of the proposed project is to address improved bicycle and pedestrian circulation, parking needs, long-term traffic flow along SR 28, scenic, and water quality needs within the Kings Beach Commercial Core area in a manner consistent with the *Community Plan*.

Source: Caltrans adapted from Mactec Engineering file.

05045.05-002 Visual (7-06)

Jones & Stokes

Figure 1
Project Location

Environmental Setting

The project is located on SR 28 within the Lake Tahoe Basin, an intermountain basin formed by the faulting of the rocks of the Sierra Nevada to the west and the Carson Range on the east. Lake Tahoe occupies a down-dropped block or graben that is bordered by steeply dipping faults.

SR 28 is the only north shore thoroughfare that runs the course of the north part of the Lake Tahoe Basin. The highway through Kings Beach includes four travel lanes, a number of driveways and minor local road intersections with and without left-turn pockets.

The principal natural drainage that occurs within the project area is Griff Creek, as well as several intermittent unnamed stream courses. The dominant plant community in the general project area consists of upper montane coniferous forest with scattered stream environment zones (SEZ).

Project Purpose

Placer County in coordination with the TRPA, Caltrans, and FHWA propose to make the following improvements on and adjacent to SR 28 within the community of Kings Beach California:

- Improve pedestrian and bicycle mobility along and across the SR 28 Kings Beach Commercial Core (KBCC);
- Improve stormwater runoff water quality;
- Improve the scenic and aesthetic character of the KBCC; and
- Implement as many TRPA Environmental Improvement Programs (EIPs) and Kings Beach Capitol Improvement Projects (CIPs) as feasible.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Mobility

Tourists come to Kings Beach to enjoy the area's aesthetic and recreational resources and facilities. At times, the local population swells by as much as 550%. Convenient pedestrian access is a critical component of commercial and recreational activities in Kings Beach. Currently, sidewalks are present in only some locations. Where sidewalks are not present, pedestrians must walk along the edge of the street or along undeveloped portions of the right-of-way. Improved pedestrian access is needed. This includes access along the commercial core, between parking and the commercial core, and between the commercial core and adjacent recreation areas.

Bicycle use is increasing in Kings Beach and in the Tahoe area generally. It is reasonable to assume that levels of bicycle use will continue to increase with time. Bicycle facilities are not present within the Kings Beach commercial core.

Bicyclists are forced to ride in the roadway, competing with automobiles and pedestrians. There is a need to improve bicycle access along the commercial core. Meeting this need will require that sufficient space be identified and set aside for use by pedestrians and bicyclists. This will include multi-use sidewalks, curbs or other barriers intended to protect pedestrians and bike lanes.

Providing safe pedestrian access across SR 28 is equally important. Currently, two signalized intersections are present at Coon Street and SR 267; each has pedestrian activated signals. Eight striped crosswalks are present at various locations along SR 28 in Kings Beach. However, crosswalk markings are visible only between June and November (striping is obliterated during the winter by snow removal equipment). Even where available and visible, these crossings offer the pedestrian only limited protection when trying to cross the roadway.

The Caltrans *Traffic Concept Report for SR 28* (Caltrans 1997a) identifies the projection for this section of SR 28 in Kings Beach in 2016 as Level of Service (LOS) F (on an A to F scale), with no projects proposed to increase capacity. When the concept report was completed in 1997 the LOS was B. Conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians were cited as a major factor in the degradation of the LOS.

Caltrans conducted a warrant analysis on five intersections throughout the project area (Secline, Deer, Fox, Bear, Chipmunk). This study was based on 1999 traffic counts and concluded that only Bear and Fox met signal warrants. The Bear intersection meets signal warrants based on interruption of continuous service, pedestrian traffic, four-hour volume, and peak-hour volume. The Fox intersection meets signal warrants based on interruption of continuous service and peak-hour volume.

Accident data for the period between January 1, 1998 and December 31, 2000 indicate that the rate of injury accidents, the rate of total accidents, and the overall accident rate within the project area are higher than for other similar facilities. Intersections at Secline, Deer, Coon, and Fox Streets have accident rates higher than the average for similar facilities. Accident levels along the project corridor (SR 28) and at corridor intersections within the project boundary can be expected to increase as traffic, pedestrian, and bicyclist volumes increase.

Scenic and Aesthetic Character of the King Beach CCIP

Historically, Kings Beach has been one of the primary commercial and recreational centers in the Tahoe Basin. However, because most of the business infrastructure (motels, businesses, rentals) developed in the 1950s remains unchanged and continues to decline, the area has suffered with respect to scenic quality and aesthetics. The commercial core area is located within the TRPAs Scenic Roadway Unit 20. Unit 20 has been defined by the TRPA as below the scenic threshold value, and therefore out-of-attainment with the Tahoe Basin's

scenic threshold. For this reason, this area has been targeted for scenic restoration under the TRPA EIP.

In addition, because of the declining infrastructure, the community has not captured a share of the higher paying clientele that patronize the more updated facilities in neighboring communities. This has resulted in a decline in business revenue and ultimately an impact on the community. This has been documented in a strategic business development plan for this area that was prepared by Placer County. This plan documents a steady decline in recreation-related business indicators over the last decade.

For this reason, it is vital that the Kings Beach commercial core be rehabilitated and revitalized to ensure the long-term success of the community.

Providing an enhanced sense of community ("main street") can increase the community's ability to accommodate commercial and recreational activity by visitors to the area. This enhancement should include a strong emphasis on attaining scenic requirements and providing a more attractive pedestrian environment. This will result in improved business revenues and a greater willingness on the part of business and private property owners to invest in building renovations and other additional community improvements.

Aesthetic improvements should be included that enhance the scenic integrity of the commercial core. These may include entry statements at the east and west ends of the commercial core, the retirement and/or replacement of non-conforming signs, the installation of streetlights, benches, transit facilities, planters intended to separate pedestrians from the roadway, bicycle racks, trash receptacles, and additional landscaping. The goal of these activities would be to meet scenic quality ratings within the project area as measured by the TRPA.

Project Need

Improvements on and adjacent to SR 28 are necessary for the reasons listed below.

1. Pedestrian and bicycle mobility is currently limited along SR 28 because pedestrians and bicyclists have to compete with vehicles on SR 28 for travel space and/or share unimproved shoulder areas within the Kings Beach commercial core. In addition, there are currently only two signalized (i.e., controlled) intersections within the commercial core where pedestrians have safe access across SR 28.
2. The business infrastructure within the Kings Beach commercial core area is in a deteriorating state, which is a contributing factor in keeping higher paying clientele from patronizing the area. In addition, due to the declining state of the business infrastructure, the Kings Beach commercial core is loosing ground in meeting the TRPA scenic thresholds established for this segment of SR 28.

3. Placer County, the TRPA, as well as local residents of Kings Beach recognize the potential benefits and importance of meeting the community and regional planning objectives set for the KBCC. Some of those benefits include creating a more aesthetically pleasing community that contributes fewer pollutants to Lake Tahoe and has fewer impacts on the greater physical environment of the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Performance Objectives/Existing Conditions that Need to be Maintained

Placer County has identified the following four aesthetics-related objectives that need to be recognized and met throughout the planning process.

1. Minimize adverse impacts to private property: The construction of elements identified as necessary to meeting the project's needs may require intrusions onto private property. To the extent practicable, such intrusions should be limited.
2. To the extent practicable, minimize the loss of parking along SR 28 due to the project: the change in parking availability due to various potential project activities (roadway, water quality, and pedestrian access improvements) would vary depending on the project's final configuration. Factors most likely to affect parking include the number and nature of intersections slated for improvement, the width of roadside amenities (sidewalks and landscaping), and the availability of alternate or shared parking facilities.
3. Improve public safety: Providing improved pedestrian and bicyclist facilities, parking facilities, and improved intersections will improve public safety substantially. During project design, attention will be directed toward the identification of other measures that might improve public safety even further. To the extent practicable, such measures will be integrated into the project design.
4. Maintain circulation patterns: As noted above, SR 28 is a component of the California state highway system and, as such, the project design must maintain an appropriate and adequate circulation pattern. The proposed project will need to be designed and implemented in such a manner that traffic circulation is addressed.

Required Permits & Approvals

Placer County under the California Environmental Quality Act

Discretionary actions required by Placer County as the lead agency under CEQA for project implementation include:

- certification of the environmental impact report (EIR);

- approval of the proposed improvements (the preferred alternative or one of the other project alternatives);
- approval of the engineering designs and advertisement of construction bids for the approved project;
- approval of right-of-way acquisitions for the approved project; and
- approval to award the construction contract for the approved project.

Caltrans

Discretionary actions required by Caltrans for project implementation include:

- certification of the EIR;
- approval of the proposed highway improvements;
- approval of final engineering designs and advertisement of construction bids for the approved project;
- approval of right-of-way acquisition for the approved project; and
- approval to award the construction contract for the approved project.

Other Agencies Approval and Permits Required

The following agencies are expected to use this EIR for approval of the following actions:

- California Department of Fish and Game (DFG)—Section 1601 Streambed Alteration Agreement
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps)—Section 404 (Nationwide) permit.

Federal Highway Administration under National Environmental Policy Act

Discretionary actions required by the FHWA as the lead agency under NEPA for project implementation include:

- certification of compliance with NEPA, Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, Section 7 of the federal Endangered Species Act, federal Clean Air Act, Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, and Executive Orders 11988 (floodplain management), 11990 (wetland protection), 12898 (environmental justice), and 13112 (invasive species);
- approval of the proposed improvements (preferred alternative or one of the other project alternatives); and

- approval of the federal funding for the right-of-way acquisition for the approved project.

Caltrans under Federal Highway Administration and National Environmental Policy Act

Caltrans is working as FHWA's agent for NEPA compliance. Other agencies are expected to use this environmental document for approval of the proposed project, either in part or in whole. Those agencies and their anticipated actions are listed below.

- Corps—Section 404 permit under the Clean Water Act.
- DFG—1601 Streambed Alteration Agreement.
- Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB)—Section 401 Water Quality Certification.

Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Thresholds

The objective of the Tahoe EIP is to achieve the Environmental Standards Carrying Capacity (ESCC) thresholds required by Public Law 96-551 and adopted for the Tahoe Region in 1982 by the TRPA. Thresholds are contained and identified in the TRPA Code of Ordinances (Code).

Project Alternatives

The TRPA and CEQA require that consideration be given to a range of alternatives that could feasibly achieve the project's goals. The purpose of the alternatives analysis is to facilitate meaningful public participation through an informed decision making process. CEQA requires a reasonable range of alternatives be considered. A comparative analysis of the alternatives will aid in defining the issues and provide a clear basis for choice by the decision-makers and the public. Final selection of an alternative will not be made until after the full evaluation of environmental impacts, consideration is given to public comments, and upon approval of the final environmental document. There are currently four action alternatives and a no-action alternative under consideration. All action alternatives (Alternatives 2–5) are illustrated in Appendix A.

Project Goals

The project needs and purposes previously described in this report are employed here as project goals that can serve to structure the alternatives definition and screening process. The identified needs and purposes are summarized below.

Identified Needs

- Improve pedestrian and bicyclist mobility along the commercial core.
- Improve pedestrian and bicyclist mobility across SR 28.
- Improve the aesthetic character of the commercial core.

Identified Purposes

- Reduce traffic speed along the corridor.
- Minimize impacts to private property.
- Provide a replacement for parking lost along SR 28 due to the project.
- Improve public safety.
- Maintain acceptable circulation patterns.

Alternatives Evaluated

The County of Placer is proposing to improve the segment of SR 28 that runs through the unincorporated community of Kings Beach, located along the north shore of Lake Tahoe. This segment of SR 28 runs from the intersection of SR 28/SR 267 to the intersection of SR 28/Chipmunk Street. Four build alternatives are evaluated—Alternatives 2, 3, 4, and 5. Each alternative would provide sidewalks and bike lanes in both directions, construction of improved pedestrian access, construction of parking areas and would result in improvements to the SR 28/SR 267, SR 28/Secline Street, SR 28/Deer Street, SR 28/Bear Street, SR 28/Coon Street, SR 28/Fox Street, and SR 28/Chipmunk Street intersections, but would vary in other respects.

Final selection of a preferred alternative will not be made until after the full evaluation of environmental impacts.

The following roadway alternatives are evaluated:

Alternative 1 (No Action)

The existing roadway configuration would be unchanged.

Alternative 2

Alternative 2 would include a:

- single 3.6-meter (12-foot) traffic lane for each direction;

- single 3.6-meter (12-foot) dual access center turn lane;
- 2.4-meter (8-foot) bike lane in each direction;
- 2.4-meter (8-foot) year-round parking lane in each direction (winter only);
- 2.9-meter (9-foot) sidewalk landscape area in each direction;
- roundabout at the intersection of SR 28/Bear Street; and
- roundabout at the intersection of SR 28/Coon Street.

Alternative 3

Alternative 3 would include a:

- two 3.3-meter (11-foot) traffic lanes in each direction;
- traffic signals at SR 267, Bear Street and Coon Street;
- left turn lanes on SR 28 at Fox Street;
- 1.5-meter (5-foot) bike lane in each direction;
- 2.4-meter (8-foot) parking lane in each direction as in Alternative 2;
- 1.7-meter (5-foot) sidewalk; and
- no parking along SR 28.

Alternative 4

Alternative 4 would include a:

- single 3.6-meter (12-foot) traffic lane for each direction;
- single 3.6-meter (12-foot) dual access center turn lane;
- 2.4-meter (8-foot) bike lane in each direction;
- 2.9-meter (9-foot) sidewalk landscape area in each direction;
- roundabout at the intersection of SR 28/Bear Street; and
- roundabout at the intersection of SR 28/Coon Street.

Alternative 5

Alternative 5 would include a:

- single 3.6-meter (12-foot) eastbound traffic lane;
- two 3.6-meter (12-foot) westbound traffic lanes;

- 3.6-meter (12-foot) dual access center turn lane as in Alternative 2;
- 2.4-meter (8-foot) westbound parking lane;
- no east bound parking lane;
- 1.5-meter (5-foot) bike lane in each direction as in Alternative 4;
- 2.3-meter (7-foot) sidewalk/landscape area in each direction;
- roundabout at the intersection of SR 28/Bear Street as in Alternative 2; and
- roundabout at the intersection of SR 28/Coon Street as in Alternative 2.

Under all alternatives (except Alternative 1), Brook Avenue from Bear Street to Coon Street would be converted to one-way eastbound, providing the opportunity for additional on-street parking.

Under all build alternatives, right-of-way would be acquired in various locations adjacent to SR 28 and near affected intersections. The right-of-way would be acquired under the Uniform Relocation and Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as amended.

Alternatives Considered and Withdrawn

Caltrans and Placer County undertook a comprehensive screening process to evaluate potential project alternatives that would be given consideration during the environmental review process. Potential alternatives were selected on their ability to meet the project objectives. In addition, other factors such as cost, environmental impacts, operational efficiency, phasing of the project during construction, and maintainability of the built system were considered. Based on this screening process Caltrans and Placer County identified the previously mentioned "build" alternatives for environmental review. At the end of the process a final selection of a preferred alternative will be made and other alternatives considered would be withdrawn.

Methodology, Affected Environment, Impacts, and Mitigation Measures

This section identifies and evaluates issues related to visual resources in the action area.

The "Affected Environment" discussion below describes the current setting of the action area. The purpose of this information is to establish the existing environmental context, or background, against which the reader can then understand the environmental changes caused by the action. The environmental setting information is intended to be directly or indirectly relevant to the subsequent discussion of impacts. For example, the setting identifies groups of

people who have views of the action area because the action could change their views and experiences.

The environmental changes associated with the action are discussed in this report under "Environmental Consequences." This section identifies impacts, describes how they would occur, and prescribes mitigation measures to reduce significant impacts.

Criteria for Visual Assessment

Identification of existing conditions with regard to visual resources entails three steps.

1. Objective identification of the visual features (visual resources) of the landscape.
2. Assessment of the character and quality of those resources relative to overall regional visual character.
3. Identification of the importance to people, or *sensitivity*, of views of visual resources in the landscape.

With an establishment of the baseline (existing) conditions, a proposed project or other change to the landscape can be systematically evaluated for its degree of impact. The degree of impact depends both on the magnitude of change in the visual resource (i.e., visual character and quality) and on viewers' responses to and concern for those changes. This general process is similar for all established federal procedures of visual assessment (Smardon et al. 1986) and represents a suitable methodology of visual assessment for other projects and areas.

The approach for this visual assessment is adapted from the FHWA's visual impact assessment system (FHWA 1983) in combination with other established visual assessment systems. The visual impact assessment process involves identification of:

- relevant policies and concerns for protection of visual resources;
- visual resources (i.e., visual character and quality) of the region, the immediate action area, and the project site;
- important viewing locations (e.g., roads) and the general visibility of the action area and site using descriptions and photographs;
- viewer groups and their sensitivity; and
- potential impacts.

Concepts and Terminology

Visual Character

Both natural and artificial landscape features make up the *character* of a view. Character is influenced by geologic, hydrologic, botanical, wildlife, recreational, and urban features. Urban features include those associated with landscape settlement and development, such as roads, utilities, structures, earthworks, and the results of other human activities. The perception of visual character can vary significantly seasonally and even hourly as weather, light, shadow, and the elements that compose the viewshed change. Form, line, color, and texture are the basic components used to describe visual character and quality for most visual assessments (U.S. Forest Service 1974, FHWA 1983). The appearance of the landscape is described in terms of the dominance of each of these components.

Visual Quality

Visual *quality* is evaluated using the well-established approach to visual analysis adopted by the FHWA, employing the concepts of vividness, intactness, and unity (Jones et al. 1975, FHWA 1983), as defined below.

- *Vividness* is the visual power or memorability of landscape components as they combine in striking or distinctive visual patterns.
- *Intactness* is the visual integrity of the natural and human-built landscape and its freedom from encroaching elements; this factor can be present in well-kept urban and rural landscapes, as well as in natural settings.
- *Unity* is the visual coherence and compositional harmony of the landscape considered as a whole; it frequently attests to the careful design of individual components in the artificial landscape.

Visual quality is evaluated based on the relative degree of vividness, intactness, and unity, as modified by its visual sensitivity. High-quality views are highly vivid, relatively intact, and exhibit a high degree of visual unity. Low-quality views lack vividness, are not visually intact, and possess a low degree of visual unity.

Visual Sensitivity and Viewer Response

The measure of the quality of a view must be tempered by the overall *sensitivity* of the viewer. Viewer sensitivity is based on the visibility of resources in the landscape, the proximity of viewers to the visual resource, the elevation of viewers relative to the visual resource, the frequency and duration of viewing, the number of viewers, and the type and expectations of individuals and viewer groups.

The criteria for identifying importance of views are related in part to the position of the viewer relative to the resource. A *viewshed* is defined as the total visible area from a single observer position, or the total visible area from multiple observer positions. Viewsheds are accumulated seen-areas from highways, trails, campgrounds, towns, cities, or other viewer locations. To identify the importance of views of a resource, a viewshed may be broken into distance zones of foreground, middleground, and background. Generally, the closer a resource is to the viewer, the more dominant it is and the greater is its importance to the viewer. Although distance zones in viewsheds may vary between different geographic regions or types of terrain, a commonly used set of criteria identifies the *foreground* zone as up to 0.5 mile from the viewer, the *middleground* zone as extending up to 4 miles from the foreground, and the *background* zone as extending 4 miles from the viewer to the horizon (U.S. Forest Service 1995).

Judgments of visual quality and viewer response must be made based in a regional frame of reference (U.S. Soil Conservation Service 1978). The same type of visual resource in different geographic areas could have a different degree of visual quality and sensitivity in each setting. For example, a small hill may be a significant visual element in a flat landscape but have very little significance in mountainous terrain.

Generally, visual sensitivity is higher for views seen by people who are driving for pleasure; people engaging in recreational activities such as hiking, biking, or camping; and homeowners. Sensitivity tends to be lower for views seen by people driving to and from work or as part of their work (U.S. Forest Service 1974, U.S. Soil Conservation Service 1978, Federal Highway Administration 1983). Commuters and nonrecreational travelers have generally fleeting views and tend to focus on commute traffic and not on surrounding scenery, and therefore are generally considered to have low visual sensitivity. Residential viewers typically have extended viewing periods and are concerned about changes in the views from their homes; therefore, they generally are considered to have moderate to high visual sensitivity. Viewers using recreation trails and areas, scenic highways, and scenic overlooks are usually assessed as having high visual sensitivity.

Regulatory Setting

Federal and State Regulations

The portion of SR 28 within the project area is an eligible state scenic highway under the California Scenic Highway Program, but it has not been officially designated under any federal or state program. Therefore, no federal or state regulations apply.

Local Regulations

Placer County

The Placer County General Plan (County General Plan) (Placer County, 1994) contains visual resource goals, objectives, and policies to preserve and enhance the scenic qualities of the Tahoe Basin.

Land Use

Commercial Land Policy 1.D.11. The County shall require that existing and new downtowns/village centers and development within them be designed to integrate open spaces into the urban fabric where possible, especially taking advantage of any natural amenities such as creeks, hillsides, and scenic views.

Visual and Scenic Resources Policy 1.K.1. The County shall require that new development in scenic areas (e.g., river canyons, lake watersheds, scenic highway corridors, ridgelines and steep slopes) is planned and designed in a manner which employs design, construction, and maintenance techniques that:

a. Avoids locating structures along ridgelines and steep slopes;

b. Incorporates design and screening measures to minimize the visibility of structures and graded areas;

c. Maintains the character and visual quality of the area.

Visual and Scenic Resources Policy 1.K.2. The County shall require that new development in scenic areas be designed to utilize natural landforms and vegetation for screening structures, access roads, building foundations, and cut and fill slopes.

Visual and Scenic Resources Policy 1.K.3. The County shall require that new development in rural areas incorporates landscaping that provides a transition between the vegetation in developed areas and adjacent open space or undeveloped areas.

Visual and Scenic Resources Policy 1.K.4. The County shall require that new development incorporates sound soil conservation practices and minimizes land alterations. Land alterations should comply with the following guidelines:

d. Limit cuts and fills;

e. Limit grading to the smallest practical area of land;

f. Limit land exposure to the shortest practical amount of time;

g. Replant graded areas to ensure establishment of plant cover before the next rainy season; and

h. Create grading contours that blend with the natural contours on site or with contours on property immediately adjacent to the area of development.

Visual and Scenic Resources Policy 1.K.5. The County shall require that new roads, parking, and utilities be designed to minimize visual impacts. Unless limited by geological or engineering constraints, utilities should be installed

underground and roadways and parking areas should be designed to fit the natural terrain.

Scenic Routes Policy 1.L.3. The County shall protect and enhance scenic corridors through such means as design review, sign control, undergrounding utilities, scenic setbacks, density limitations, planned unit developments, grading and tree removal standards, open space easements, and land conservation contracts.

Scenic Routes Policy 1.L.4. The County shall provide for landscaping and/or landscaped mounding along designated scenic corridors where desirable to maintain and improve scenic qualities and screen unsightly views.

Scenic Routes Policy 1.L.5. The County shall encourage the development of trails, picnicking, observation points, parks, and roadside rests along scenic highways.

Scenic Routes Policy 1.L.6. The County shall protect and maintain historical landmarks and historical monuments along scenic routes.

Scenic Routes Policy 1.L.7. The County shall encourage the use of bicycles as an alternative mode of travel for recreational purposes in scenic corridors.

Scenic Routes Policy 1.L.8. The County shall include aesthetic design considerations in road construction, reconstruction, or maintenance for all scenic routes under County jurisdiction.

Scenic Routes Policy 1.L.9. The County shall support anti-litter, beautification, and cleanup programs along scenic routes.

Scenic Routes Policy 1.L.10. The County shall coordinate scenic route programs among local, regional, and state jurisdictions, recognizing that scenic routes are a resource of more than local importance.

Transportation and Circulation

Streets and Highways Policy 3.A7. The County shall develop and manage its roadway system to maintain the following minimum LOS: LOS C on rural roadways, except within one-half mile of state highways where the standard shall be LOS D, and LOS C on urban/suburban roadways except within 0.5 mile of state highways where the standard shall be LOS D.

The County may allow exceptions to these LOS standards where it finds that the improvements or other measures required to achieve the LOS standards are unacceptable based on established criteria. In allowing any exception to the standards, the County shall consider the following factors:

The visual aesthetics of the required improvement and its impact on community identity and character.

Public Facilities and Services

General Public Facilities and Services Policy 4.A.4. The County shall require proposed new development in identified underground conversion districts and

along scenic corridors to underground utility lines on and adjacent to the site of proposed development or, when this is infeasible, to contribute funding for future undergrounding.

Natural Resources

Vegetation Policy 6.D.1. The County shall encourage landowners and developers to preserve the integrity of existing terrain and natural vegetation in visually-sensitive areas such as hillsides, ridges, and along important transportation corridors.

Vegetation Policy 6.D.10. The County shall encourage the planting of native trees, shrubs, and grasslands in order to preserve the visual integrity of the landscape, provide habitat conditions suitable for native wildlife, and ensure that a maximum number and variety of well-adapted plants are maintained.

Open Space for the Preservation of Natural Resources Policy 6.E.3. The County shall support the maintenance of open space and natural areas that are interconnected and of sufficient size to protect biodiversity, accommodate wildlife movement, and sustain ecosystems.

In each case, compliance with the TRPA would achieve compliance with County requirements.

Kings Beach Community Plan

The Kings Beach Community Plan (Community Plan) (Placer County and Tahoe Regional Planning Agency 1996) contains specific visual resource goals, objectives, and policies that directly relate to the project area and serve to preserve and enhance the scenic qualities of the Tahoe Basin; these policies integrate with the policies of the Placer County General Plan. According to the Kings Beach Community Plan Introduction (Placer County and Tahoe Regional Planning Agency 2006):

> Pursuant to Chapter 14 of the TRPA Code of Ordinances, the Kings Beach Community Plan supersedes certain plans and regulations established by the TRPA Plan Area Statements (PAS) and the TRPA Code for the area within the Community Plan boundaries. For purposes of Placer County land use regulation, the Community Plan and the Placer County General Plan and implementing ordinances shall become one and the same. Upon adoption, the Community Plan (CP) is intended to serve as the mutual plan for all regulatory authorities.

These policies apply to the proposed project, a number of which refer specifically to the TRPA:

Land Use Element

Planning Consideration 5. Scenic Roadway Unit 20 and Scenic Shoreline Unit 21 are within this Plan area and the Roadway unit is targeted for scenic restoration as required by the scenic threshold.

Urban Design and Development Policy 1a—Special Area 1 (Downtown Area Commercial). tourist-oriented commercial uses are the predominant

theme. This area represents the "heart of the downtown Kings Beach Community, and generally fronts on State Route 28. This area has historically had a wide range of commercial activity not always compatible among themselves and not always appropriate for a tourist-oriented economy. The policy of this Plan is to keep the types of activities more homogeneous and oriented to the visiting public.

Urban Design and Development Policy 1b—Special Area 2 (East and West Entry Commercial Areas). more emphasis is placed on commercial services oriented more to the local population, such as auto repair, building materials and hardware, laundries and dry cleaning, and storage yards, to name a few. These areas are generally at the entrance points at either end of the commercial districts.

Urban Design and Development Policy 1c—Special Area 3 (Recreation Area). permissible uses are oriented toward outdoor recreation activities. This area is generally defined geographically on the State Beach area, and is bounded generally between State Route 28 and the lake, in the middle of the downtown area. Limited commercial activity is permitted to reflect the historical relation between lake-front recreation and tourist-related commercial activities.

Urban Design and Development Policy 5a. Pursuant to the general recommendations for scenic improvements in Chapter IV, all projects within the scenic corridor shall be responsible for removing, relocating or screening overhead utilities as a condition of project approval. The TRPA may waive this requirement if the project is part of an undergrounding program or the undergrounding has been determined by the TRPA not to be necessary to meet the scenic targets of this Plan.

Urban Design and Development Policy 7a. The Design Review Committee shall consider the recommendations of the Scenic Target section of Chapter IV when reviewing projects and, where appropriate, incorporate conditions of approval to implement the recommendations of the Scenic Target section or the equal or superior recommendations of the applicant.

Urban Design and Development Policy 8a. Projects located between the designated scenic corridors and Lake Tahoe shall not cause a reduction of the views of Lake Tahoe from the corridors. The TRPA may consider as an alternative, offsite improvements if it is determined there is a net increase in the lake views within the scenic unit.

Transportation/Control Program/Action Element

Streets and Highways Policy 1. State Route 28 Improvements—State Route 28 shall be improved to include four lanes (two in each direction with no center turn lane), Class II bikeways on each side, parallel parking in the pedestrian district, medians in the entry areas, curb, and sidewalks. The construction of the highway improvements will be in conjunction with the construction of sidewalks, curbs, drainage system, landscaping, utility undergrounding and lighting. Figure 3 shows the location of the improvements in concept.

Streets and Highways Policy 2. Local Street Improvements—Local commercial streets shall be improved to include two travel lanes, parallel

parking, and sidewalks. Some streets such as Brook may become one way with elimination of parallel parking.

Streets and Highways Policy 3. State Route 28/267 Intersection Improvement—This intersection will be upgraded with turn lanes, scenic improvements, and medians.

Streets and Highways Policy 4. Coon Street Intersection Improvement—This four way signalized intersection on State Route 28 will be upgraded with turn lanes and scenic improvements.

Streets and Highways Policy 5. Bear Street Intersection Improvement—This three way intersection on State Route 28 will be redesigned to include turn lanes and a conversion of Brook Street to one way.

Streets and Highways Policy 6. Truck Route/By Pass—Improvement of the existing truck route or relocation should be considered in future traffic studies, provided conflict can be avoided with sensitive locations such as schools and residential neighborhoods.

Parking Facilities Policy 1. Kings Beach Parking—To meet parking requirements, compensate for lost parking due to State Route 28 improvements, achieve targets, and to provide for additional development, a series of parking lots are to be constructed. The lots shown in Figure 3 are conceptual in design and location and will require further study. The location and size of the parking shall be based on an area-wide analysis/program developed by Placer County. The CIP lists the important public parking lots.

Transit Facilities Policy 1. Tahoe Area Regional Transit (TART) Expansion—Increased service from TART by decreasing headways, by increasing the variety of vehicles, and by increasing the hours of operation. Possible locations of routes, bus stops, and parking lots are shown in Figure 3 and further described in the Chapter VII, Improvement Program.

Transit Facilities Policy 2. Kings Beach/Tahoe Vista Shuttle—A shuttle that serves just Kings Beach, Tahoe Vista, and North Stateline with short headways will be provided for peak seasons.

Transit Facilities Policy 3. Water Transit Terminals—Opportunities for water transit are included in the area of the State Park.

Transit Facilities Policy 4. Ski/Tour Shuttles—Coordination of transit services to recreational destinations (i.e. ski buses) will provide transit during the critical winter peaks.

Transit Facilities Policy 5. Truckee Shuttle—Tour bus service and a TART connection to the Amtrak train depot in Truckee will provide transit service to the area visitors.

Transit Facilities Policy 6. Lake Tour Bus—An around-the-lake bus system will provide for longer range trips for visitors and residents.

Pedestrian Facilities Policy 1. SR 28 Pedestrian Facilities—The construction of sidewalks on SR 28 is shown in Figure 4. The conceptual designs of the sidewalk system for the pedestrian area and the entry areas are shown in the Kings Beach Design Standards and Guidelines (Appendix B) and includes landscaping, lighting, trash receptacles, and bike racks.

Transit Facilities Policy 2. Local Commercial Street Pedestrian Facilities—The construction of sidewalks on local commercial streets is shown in Figure 3. The conceptual design of the sidewalk system is shown in the Kings Beach Design Standards and Guidelines (Appendix B) and includes landscaping, lighting, trash receptacles, and bike racks.

Bicycle Facilities Policy 1. Recreational Trail System—To improve circulation, reduce vehicle trips, and improve public access to Lake Tahoe, the CP calls for the construction of the SR 28 trail system and the Lake Promenade shown in Figure 3. Also, included is the proposed trail connecting the Kings Beach Elementary School with the State Park.

Conservation Element

Environmental Targets Policy 3: Scenic. The opportunities for scenic restoration have been identified by the TRPA Scenic Thresholds. Kings Beach has been identified by the TRPA Scenic Quality Improvement (SQIP) as in need of scenic improvements for the highway unit.

Base Line: The 1982 Inventory identifies two principal resources within the unit: Views out to the lake and the ridgelines beyond and views north to the forested mountain slopes and ridgelines. Within the Kings Beach Community Plan portion of this unit, the two locations identified as providing significant lake views are subcomponents 5 and 3.
Travel Route Rating: 10
Scenic Resource Threshold: 9

The Kings Beach area generally needs to present a more coordinated appearance with fewer visual distractions so that viewers will be permitted to enjoy the area's positive visual qualities. Recommendations to simplify and upgrade the character and quality of the commercial strip include consistency of setbacks, attention to parking and landscaping, undergrounding of utilities, and design and sign program compliance.

TRPA Threshold: The TRPA Thresholds require the TRPA to attain and maintain Scenic Route Ratings at 15+ for highway units and 7+ for shoreline units.

Regional Plan Requirements: The Regional Plan requires implementation of the Scenic Quality Improvement Program (including the Restoration Program, Design Review Guidelines, Design Standards and Outdoor Advertising Standards). The SQIP requires a 27% improvement in roadway scores and a 33% increase in shoreline scores by 1997.

Kings Beach Target: The CP shall attain SQIP thresholds targets by 1997 through implementation of the CP Scenic Quality Improvement Program.

Key Implementation Strategies: The Kings Beach Community Plan shall achieve its target by implementing regulations and improvements that satisfy the following SQIP recommendations. Regulations of the Placer County Tahoe Area Design Guidelines and the Placer County Tahoe Area Sign Ordinance will be implemented through utilizing the North Tahoe Design Review Committee and TRPA and County staff. Implementation of the scenic improvements listed in Chapter VII and the sign improvement program will also be required to meet the following SQIP recommendations.

Issues that are most important within the Kings Beach area include enforcement of sign regulations, removal of overhead utility lines, and a general upgrading of the architectural quality of development in the area.

Recreation Element

Proposed Recreation Improvements 1. Improved Lake Access—The Plan target requires an increase in Lake access. Some of the possible improvements are the lake recreation trail system and parking, increased beach access at the State and [North Tahoe Public Utilities District] NTPUD beaches, and increased boat launching.

Proposed Recreation Improvements 2. Recreation Trail System—The Plan requires the implementation of a recreational/bike trail system mostly located along the Lake and SR 28. Also, trails connecting the elementary school with the lake should be constructed. The map shows possible alignments.

Proposed Recreation Improvements 3. Golf Course Improvements—The Plan calls for the retention of the Brockway Golf Course. Figure 8 suggests consideration of a nine hole expansion, and a renovation of the club house.

Implementation Element

SEZ Restoration Program 3: Scenic Improvements Program.

Purpose: To implement the improvements needed to attain the scenic thresholds.

Program Description: This program contains several programs, including:

Underground Utilities—Overhead utilities are to be undergrounded on SR 267 near the intersection of SR 28.

Estimated Cost:	$1,000,000
Funding:	Private, Caltrans, Sierra Pacific, Pacific Bell

SR 28 Improvements—See Design Standards and Guidelins for Kings Beach SR 28 Improvements and Sigh Program.

Sign Program—Non conforming signs shall be removed pursuant to an amortization schedule or an individual schedule established with each of the businesses. The preferred method is to link the sign upgrading to the off-setting scenic improvements.

Tahoe Regional Planning Agency

Scenic Resource Thresholds

The TRPA has established four types of scenic resource thresholds to protect scenic views in the Tahoe Basin, listed below. Numeric ratings are used to determine whether a specific route or area attains the threshold; the processes by which overall ratings are determined are described below.

Scenic Resource SR-1, Travel Route Ratings

Travel route ratings track long-term, cumulative changes to views from major roadways in urban, transitional, and natural landscapes in the region, and to the views seen from Lake Tahoe looking toward the shore. These ratings are measured by a numeric composite index (score) of relative scenic quality of the entire view seen from travel routes using the following threshold indicators:

- man-made features along the roadway and shoreline;
- physical distractions to driving along the roadways;
- roadway characteristics;
- view of the lake from the roadways;
- general landscape views from the roadways and shoreline; and
- variety of scenery from the roadways and shoreline.

Each indicator is rated from 1 (low or absent) to 5 (high or significant feature present) and averaged to determine the overall score. To attain the threshold, all travel routes with a score of 15.5 (roadway) or 7.5 (shoreline) or more must maintain their scores, and those with a score of 15 (roadway) or 7 (shoreline) or less must improve their scores until the threshold is met.

Scenic Resource SR-2, Scenic Quality Ratings

Scenic quality thresholds protect (i.e., maintain or enhance) specific views of scenic features of Tahoe's natural landscape that can be seen from major roadways and from Lake Tahoe itself. The TRPA provided for the development of environmental carrying capacities, or "thresholds." In 1982, the TRPA completed an inventory to define and establish thresholds for the preservation of scenic quality, established numerical standards for roadway and shoreline travel route ratings, and developed management policies for community design elements. A total of 250 scenic resources were identified during the 1982 inventory that were visible from roadway units; 185 were identified as visible from shoreline units, including three roadway resources, and one additional shoreline resource was identified in 2001. Scenic resources include:

- foreground, middleground, and background views from roadways and of the natural landscape;
- views to Lake Tahoe from roadways;
- views of Lake Tahoe and natural landscapes from roadway entry points into the region;

- unique landscape features such as streams, beaches, and rock formations that add interest and variety, as seen from roadways;
- views of the shoreline, the water's edge, and the foreground as seen from the lake;
- views of the backdrop landscape, including the skyline, as seen from the lake; and
- visual features seen from the lake that are points of particular visual interest on or near the shore.

To determine the overall scenic quality score of a view, unity, vividness, variety, and intactness are measured on a scale from 0 (absent) to 3 (high), then the measurements are added to calculate the overall score. To attain the TRPA threshold, the scenic quality scores that were determined for the 1982 Study Report must be maintained.

Scenic Resource SR-3, Public Recreation Areas and Bike Trails
The public recreation area threshold protects the viewshed from public recreation areas and certain bicycle trails. To secure threshold attainment, all 1993 scenic quality scores must be maintained.

Scenic Resource SR-4, Community Design
The community design threshold is a policy statement that applies to the built environment. Design standards and guidelines found in the Code of Ordinances, the Scenic Quality Improvement Program, and in the adopted Community Plans provide specific implementation direction. To secure threshold attainment, design standards and guidelines must be widely implemented to improve travel route ratings and produce built environments compatible with the natural, scenic, and recreational values of the region.

Threshold Attainment and Related Policies

Specific policies from the TRPA's Scenic Quality Improvement Program that discuss scenic resource thresholds are listed below.

- **Regional Plan Goal 1, Policy 1:** The scenic quality ratings established by the environmental thresholds shall be maintained or improved.
- **Roadway and Shoreline Unit Goal 1, Policy 2:** Any development proposed in areas targeted for scenic restoration or within a unit highly sensitive to change shall demonstrate the effect of the project on the 1982 travel route ratings of the scenic thresholds.
- **Roadway and Shoreline Unit Goal 1, Policy 3:** The factors or conditions that contribute to scenic degradation in identified areas need to be recognized and appropriately considered in restoration programs to improve scenic quality.

The project site lies in the TRPA Roadway Unit 20B—Kings Beach and Roadway Unit 40—Brockway Cutoff and in Shoreline Unit 21—Agate Bay and Shoreline Unit 22—Brockway (See Figure 2). Shoreline Unit 21—Agate Bay is considered a travel route unit at risk because "rebuilds and upgrades with

inadequate improvements continue this unit at risk" (Tahoe Regional Planning Agency 2002).

Design Standards

The following should be considered for the development of specific mitigation measures required for the proposed project: design standards contained in Chapter 30 and in Section VII of the Code of Ordinances (Tahoe Regional Planning Agency 2002); Design Review Guidelines, Scenic Quality Improvement Program, and Technical Appendices of the Regional Plan for the Lake Tahoe Basin (Tahoe Regional Planning Agency 1989); Draft Roadway Design Standards and Guidelines (Tahoe Regional Planning Agency 2004); Placer County Tahoe Area Design Guidelines (Placer County 2003); and the Placer County Tahoe Area Sign Ordinance (Placer County 2006).

Affected Environment

Environmental Setting

Regional Character

The project site is located along SR 28 and is the main thoroughfare in the City of Kings Beach in eastern Placer County, California. In relation to nearby cities, the site is approximately 23 miles southwest of Reno, 8 miles west of Incline Village, 14 miles northwest of Carson City (Nevada's capitol), 20 miles north of South Lake Tahoe, 8 miles northeast of Tahoe City, 1.3 miles east of Tahoe Vista, and 11 miles southeast of Truckee. The project region, as discussed in this section, is considered the area within a 30-mile radius of the project location. The scenic beauty of glacier-carved Lake Tahoe and the surrounding Sierra Mountains dominates the region. The region attracts recreationists who ski, hike, bike, golf, camp, boat, and fish in and around the snow-capped peaks surrounding the lake. The California-Nevada border roughly divides the eastern third of lake. East of that border, gamblers visit hotel-casinos in and around Reno northeast of the site, across the border along SR 28 within 1.25 miles southeast of the site, and south of the site in South Lake Tahoe. This wide array of visitors makes the region largely a tourist destination.

While growth in the region is limited by the steep terrain of the Sierras as well as water bodies and public parks, development continues to pressure rural areas such as scrub land and pastureland especially north and south of Reno. Reno has also experienced a central revitalization along the Truckee River running through the downtown. Smaller towns and cities surrounding Lake Tahoe also experience similar pressures of growth. This is changing the visual character from rural to suburban in some areas while also from urban sprawl to more dense urban centers in other areas.

Reno is in high desert, but the Sierras and the area immediately surrounding the project area is surrounded by more alpine tree cover. The dominant plant community in the general project area consists of upper montane coniferous

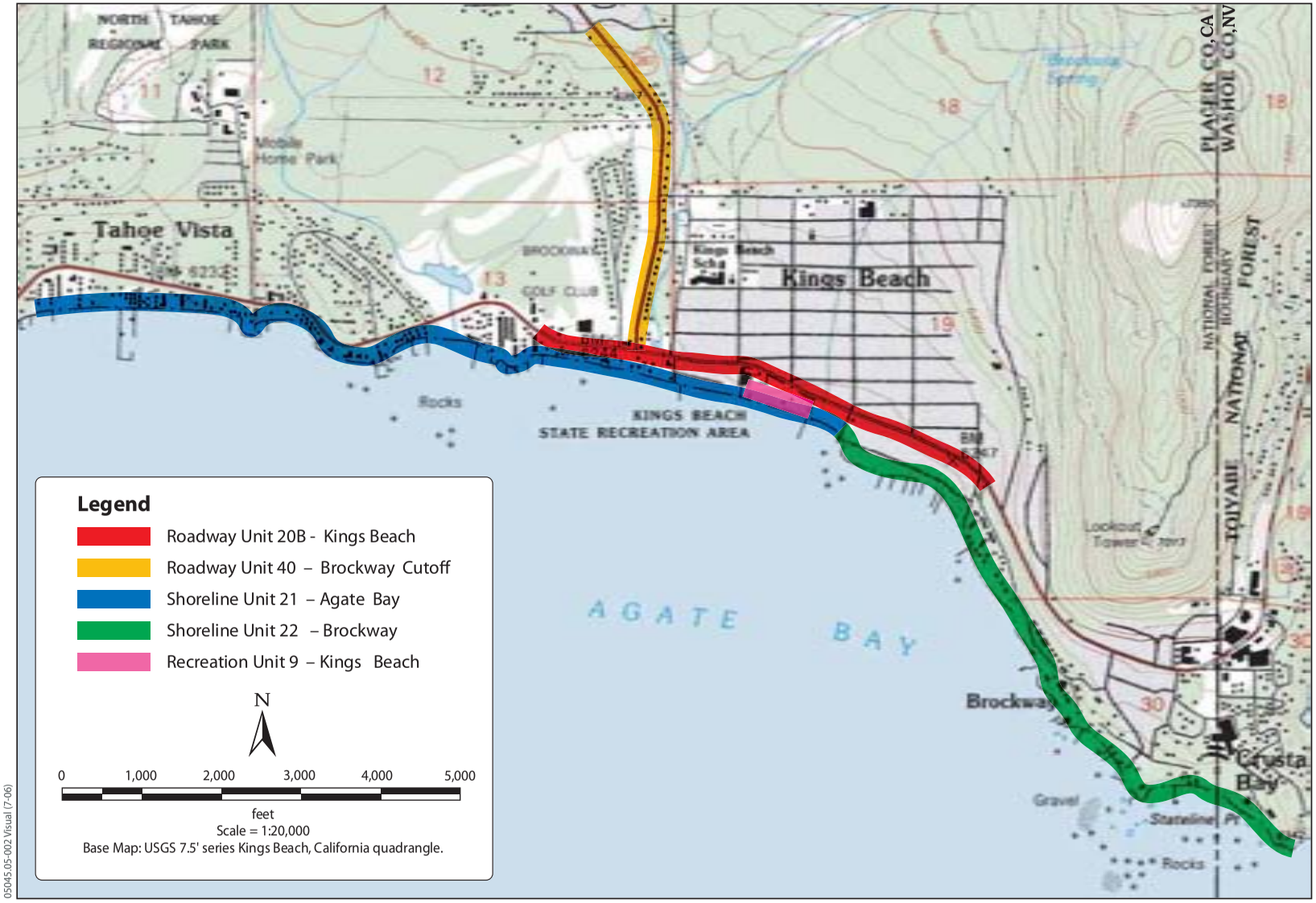

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Figure 2
Study Area Units

forest. Water features in the greater region include: Washoe Lake, Lake Tahoe, Loon Lake, Hell Hole Reservoir, French Meadows Reservoir, Donner Lake, Boca Reservoir, Truckee River, and Carson River. The region has various urban and suburban areas amid pleasing scenic views as well as more natural environments surrounding Lake Tahoe. Because of the diversity of topography, vastness and clarity of the lake, and expanses of forested slopes, the visual quality of the project region is very high in vividness; however intactness and unity are considered to be moderately high to high based on the visibility of developed features and infrastructure.

Project Area Character

The project vicinity is defined as the area within 0.5 mile of the project site. The project site is characterized primarily by commercial properties with some views of the lake along SR 28 in Kings Beach between SR 267 and Chipmunk Street. See Figure 1 for project area and Figure 3 for locations of representative site photographs in Figures 4 through 15. The highway is currently a four lanes with no turning lane, with street parking on the north and south sides. There is minimal striping for pedestrian crossings at most intersections. Traffic signals are currently only at the intersection of Coon Street and SR 28 and the intersection of SR 28 and SR 267.

North of the Project Site

North of the project site is a grid of Kings Beach residences and some public buildings such as a library and elementary school. The neighborhood has dense mature coniferous and deciduous trees interspersed with power lines. Most neighborhood roads lack curbs and slope directly into simple dirt-covered properties that range from moderately low to moderately high visual quality (see Figure 4, Viewpoints 1 and 2; Figure 5, Viewpoint 3).

East of the Project Site

A steep ridgeline marks the east end of Kings Beach (see Figure 5, Viewpoint 4). Single-family residences line either side of Beaver Street, Bend Avenue, and Park Lane north of SR 28. Views become much more natural to the east end of the project vicinity along SR 28, curving around the ridgeline to the southeast (see Figure 6, Viewpoint 5). While power lines are visible on the north side of the highway, scenic views of Lake Tahoe are readily apparent over the wood and brown metal guardrail south of the highway. Single-family residences and condominiums are perched out of site down the hill toward Lake Tahoe south of SR 28. The visual quality east of the project site is moderate to moderately high.

South of the Project Site

The vicinity south of SR 28 along the eastern side of the project site includes single-family and condominium residences on either side of Brockway Springs Drive, which are directly behind the commercial structures along SR 28. Some mature coniferous and deciduous trees can be seen on the eastern end of Brockway Springs Drive while more dense foliage surrounds the residences on the western end. Several of these residences south of the street have direct private beach access. Further west and south of SR 28, about mid-way along the

project site is the Coon Street Boat Launch and the Kings Beach State Recreation Area stretching close to a quarter mile. Further west and south of SR 28, Brockway Vista provides access to lakefront properties behind the commercial properties along SR 28. Further west, running north to south and paralleling Secline Street is Griff Creek, which empties into Lake Tahoe at a small public park. Further west and immediately south of the intersection of SR 28 and SR 267 is Secline Beach with the Sweetbriar condominiums along the highway. The visual quality south of the project site varies from moderate to moderately high.

West of the Project Site

The properties further west and south of SR 28 within the vicinity of the project site are primarily condominiums with access to Lake Tahoe. On the west edge of the project vicinity, Snow Creek runs north to south, emptying into Lake Tahoe. The area north of SR 28 around Snow Creek and further east appears relatively unspoiled with a mixture of tall, mature evergreen and deciduous trees but also flanked by wooden power lines and basic shoulder treatment along the highway. Generally northwest of the intersection of Highways 28 and 267 are a few commercial properties including a Safeway grocery store, with the Old Brockway Golf Course primarily visible along both highways within the project vicinity. The golf course surrounds several dozen single-family residences directly north of the golf course clubhouse. The visual quality west of the project site varies from moderate to moderately high.

Project Vicinity Visual Quality

Overall, the project vicinity includes some moderately high vivid scenic views as well as vivid commercial and residential elements, while the intactness and unity of the overall quality throughout the vicinity is moderate. Therefore, the overall visual quality is moderate to moderately high.

Study Area Units and Key Viewpoints

The area surrounding and including the project area has been analyzed using the TRPA unit system to provide a framework for analysis. The units are shown in Figure 2. Key viewpoints, shown in Figure 3, have been chosen for their representation of the unit within which they are located and those viewers affected.

Roadway Unit 20B—Kings Beach

Roadway Unit 20B extends along SR 28 from Beach Street on the west, to the portion of Chipmunk Street south of SR 28 on the east. Six key viewpoints in Unit 20B, spatially located in Figure 3, are shown in Figures 10 through 15. Viewers in this unit are business owners, residents, travelers on SR 28, and recreationists.

The four-lane SR 28 gently curves through Kings Beach and is bounded on either side by tall, relatively dense mature coniferous and deciduous trees with a few

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Figure 3
Key Viewpoints

Viewpoint 1. Looking east on Steelhead Avenue. The Kings Beach Elementary addition is visible at left.

Viewpoint 2. Looking east at the residential neighborhood along Steelhead Avenue.

05045.05-002

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Figure 4
Viewpoints 1 and 2

Viewpoint 3. Looking northeast from Fox Street at mobile homes.

Viewpoint 4. Looking east along Highway 28 toward the intersection with Chipmunk Street.

05045.05-002

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Figure 5
Viewpoints 3 and 4

Viewpoint 5. Looking southeast from Highway 28, southeast of the intersection with Beaver Street.

Viewpoint 6. Looking west at Safeway right-of-way.

05045.05-002

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Figure 6
Viewpoints 5 and 6

Viewpoint 7. Looking south along Highway 267 before power lines go underground to the south.

Viewpoint 8. Looking south along Highway 267 after power lines go underground to the south.

05045.05-002

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Figure 7
Viewpoints 7 and 8

Viewpoint 9. Looking south along Highway 267 with golf course visible to the right.

Viewpoint 10. Looking south along Highway 267 toward interesection with Highway 28, with Lake Tahoe visible beyond.

05045.05-002

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Figure 8
Viewpoints 9 and 10

Viewpoint 11. Looking south toward Highway 28 from Highway 267 in 1986.

05045.05-002

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Figure 9
View of Intersection of Highways 267 and 28 in 1986
(courtesy of TRPA)

Match Line

Viewpoint 12W. Looking west toward the intersection with Secline Street and Highway 267 beyond.

Match Line

Viewpoint 12E. Looking east from the intersection with Secline Street.

0504505-002

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Figure 10
Viewpoint 12

Match Line

Viewpoint 13 W. Looking west from the intersection with Deer Street.

Match Line

Viewpoint 13E. Looking east toward the intersection with Deer Street.

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Figure 11
Viewpoint 13

Match Line

Viewpoint 14W. Looking west from the intersection with Bear Street.

Match Line

Viewpoint 14E. Looking east toward the intersection with Bear Street.

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Figure 12
Viewpoint 14

Viewpoint 15W. Looking west from the intersection with Coon Street and Brockway Vista Avenue.

Viewpoint 15E. Looking east toward the intersection with Coon Street and Brockway Vista Avenue.

0504S-05-002

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Figure 13
Viewpoint 15

Match Line

Viewpoint 16W. Looking west toward the intersection with Coon Street and Brockway Vista Avenue.

Match Line

Viewpoint 16E. Looking east east toward the intersection with Fox Street.

0504S-05-002

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Figure 14
Viewpoint 16

Match Line

Viewpoint 17W. Looking west toward the intersection with Fox Street.

Match Line

Viewpoint 17E. Looking east toward the intersection with Chipmunk Street.

0504S-05-002

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Figure 15
Viewpoint 17

smaller ornamental trees and herbaceous vegetation. Lining the highway are primarily tourist-based commercial businesses such as motels and lodges, restaurants, gift shops, gas stations, and recreation craft rentals with a few condominiums and private single-family residences also facing the highway.

Power lines are not visible throughout this roadway unit. Fencing along the roadway includes split wood, chain link, and some wood board, and also includes a few stone, concrete, and brick elements. Business signs are of various types including wooden, neon, and light-behind plastic. Various building materials in use include wood panel and wood siding of various types and colors, concrete block, painted brick, stone façade, glass and steel, and stucco. At least one prominent building north of the highway, on the east end of the roadway unit appears to be under construction or renovation.

Curbs, gutters, sidewalks, landscaping, and directed lighting are largely absent with the exception of the right of way of the Safeway grocery store northwest of the intersection of Highways 28 and 267 and that of the Kings Beach State Recreation Area south of SR 28 roughly in the middle of Unit 20B. The existing roadway shoulder treatment is inconsistent, which creates uncertainty and distractions for motorists. Some light fixtures in these two areas are of matching design and integrate well with the existing architectural site features (see Figure 6, Viewpoint 6 and Figure 13, Viewpoint 15W). Standard tall galvanized steel streetlights currently light the highway and intersections (see Figure 12, Viewpoint 14E or 15E).

Views of Lake Tahoe are especially apparent, though somewhat blocked by street parking, across Kings Beach State Recreation Area near the middle of Unit 20B. Middleground and background views of the distant ridgelines are apparent at the east and west ends of the highway viewshed. With the exception of these middleground and background views, viewing distance is limited to the foreground by vegetation and the winding nature of the roadway.

The existing travel route rating and scenic quality rating of this unit is summarized in Tables 1 and 2, respectively.

Roadway Unit 40—Brockway Cutoff

Roadway Unit 40 extends along SR 267 from the intersection with SR 28 at the south end to the intersection with Cambridge Drive to the north. Viewers in this unit include residents, travelers on SR 267, and recreationists.

Dense, mature coniferous trees are especially prominent in this unit surrounding residences on either side of the roadway. Power lines are prominent at the north end of this unit (see Figure 7, Viewpoint 7) but are no longer visible at the point where the highway meets the Old Brockway Golf Course (see Figure 7, Viewpoint 8). The Old Brockway Golf Course borders the west side of the southern two-thirds of this roadway unit (see Figure 8, Viewpoint 9). Shorter mature deciduous trees primarily line this area along a split wood fence. On a

clear day, Mount Tallac can be seen briefly in the background between these trees (see Figure 8, Viewpoint 10 and Figure 9, Viewpoint 11).

The two-lane highway has a shoulder that is a few feet wide but has no curbs, gutters, or sidewalks. The residences along the highway were built using wood and concrete with wood, metal, and asphalt shingle roofing. Lake Tahoe can be seen between the condominiums and the trees from SR 267 at the intersection with SR 28 however, middleground and background views are limited by vegetation and the winding nature of the roadway (see Figure 8, Viewpoint 10).

The existing travel route rating and scenic quality rating of this unit is summarized in Tables 1 and 2, respectively.

Shoreline Unit 21—Agate Bay

Shoreline Unit 21 extends from the western end of Tahoe Vista approximately to Coon Street in Kings Beach. Viewers in this unit are residents, businesses, and recreationists.

This sandy shoreline includes several single-family residences and condominiums, several piers, a small marina, and public beach access. Views from the lake are of shoreline buildings with various materials and colors, mixed with mature coniferous vegetation leading to mountain peaks in the background. Recreationists can be common on the shore or in boats. Nighttime views of the shore from the lake are primarily spotted with low-intensity residence lighting.

The existing travel route rating and scenic quality rating of this unit is summarized in Tables 1 and 2, respectively.

Shoreline Unit 22—Brockway

Shoreline Unit 22 extends from Coon Street through Brockway on the east side of the Nevada-California state line. Viewers in this unit are residents, businesses, and recreationists.

This shoreline unit is primarily characterized by residences with private beach access and several piers. The shoreline wraps around Lake Tahoe's northernmost peninsula. Views from the lake include mature coniferous vegetation with the peninsula's ridgeline in the middleground and the often snow-capped mountain peaks in the background. Especially toward the tip of the peninsula to the east end of Unit 22, the shore is generally more steep and rocky than some of the more gradual sandy beaches west of this unit. Nighttime views of the shore from the lake are primarily spotted with low-intensity residence lighting.

The existing travel route rating and scenic quality rating of this unit is summarized in Tables 1 and 2, respectively.

Recreation Unit 9—Kings Beach

Recreation Unit 9 represents the Kings Beach State Recreation Area, which includes 1,400 linear feet of beach with a pier, picnic area, boat launch, restrooms, parking facilities, and the North Tahoe Conference Center. Viewers in this unit are primarily recreationists (see Figure 13, Viewpoint 15W).

Recreationists in the water can see Mount Baldy and other surrounding ridgelines in the background. With recreationists on the beach, they can also see through the mature coniferous and deciduous vegetation interspersed throughout the area to the businesses on the north side of SR 28. The parking area between the beach and SR 28 has well-defined brick paver walkways, split wood fencing, low stone walls, large landscape rocks, telephone pole-sized wood landscape barriers, and low herbaceous landscape vegetation. The restroom design blends well with the regional character.

The tall parking lot lighting is directed downward while the walkways are lit with shorter light fixtures that integrate well with the existing architectural site features.

The existing travel route rating and scenic quality rating of this unit is summarized in Tables 1 and 2, respectively.

Table 1. 2001 Travel Route Ratings and Comments

	2001 Travel Route Rating	2001 Rating Comments
Roadway Units		
20B—Kings Beach	12.5	This unit extends approximately 1.2 miles from Beach St. to lakeside part of Chipmunk Dr. Improvements noted since 1996 include remodel of Safeway and landscaping and structure upgrade at the golf course, and the California Tahoe Conservancy removal of fence and spa building at North Tahoe Beach Center site. Some sign and facade improvements have also occurred in Kings Beach. The new fish mural is an improvement to a large blank wall without creating distraction from natural setting. This unit is not in threshold attainment.
40—Brockway Cutoff	15	The focused lake view down the golf course has been degraded through addition and maturation of landscaping in the fairway and placement of new cafe/pro shop structure. This is true even though the terminus of the view at the lake has improved with removal of structure and fence at Tahoe Beach Center site. The golf course cafe/pro shop displays improved architectural features compared to the previous structure, yet is more visible from this unit. Required landscaping mitigation will likely, over time, allow an improvement in the man-made features score. This unit is not in threshold attainment.
Shoreline Units		
21—Agate Bay	8	The low man-made features rating reflects, in part, the number of boats and beach equipment clutter found along the beach throughout this unit. Several residential rebuilds include poor setback and screening characteristics. Two tourist accommodation upgrade projects fail to make scenic improvements. This unit remains at risk.
22—Brockway	9	New medium large houses with inadequate screening and large window area reduce the manmade features score. The reduction in variety reflects an amendment in previous scores and the loss of some native shoreline vegetation. This unit is not in threshold attainment and is at risk.
Recreation Area		
9—Kings Beach	n/a	

Source: TRPA 2002

Table 2. 2001 Scenic Quality Ratings and Comments

	2001 Scenic Quality Rating	2001 Rating Comments
Roadway Units		
20B—Kings Beach	9	A short lake view at the base of SR 267 has opened through CTC removal of a structure and view-blocking fence. A framed view of Mt. Tallac is offered, blocked in some areas with residual non-native vegetation.
40—Brockway Cutoff	8	The addition of landscaping along the fairway blocks this targeted view. In addition, construction of the relocated café/pro shop at the golf course narrows the frame of the view and changes its character.
Shoreline Units		
21—Agate Bay	8	n/a
22—Brockway	9	n/a
Recreation Area		
9—Kings Beach	12	The distractions of poorly maintained commercial buildings to the north have been removed by the CTC park project. Commercial development across the highway and the roadway itself has become visible in this area, however, precluding an increase in the Intactness score. As vegetation matures, Intactness will probably improve.

Source: TRPA 2002

Viewer Groups and Viewer Responses

Viewer groups in the vicinity of the action area and their sensitivity to visual changes in the area are characterized below.

Residents

Approximately four single-family residences (see Figure 14, Viewpoint 16W for an example), two residence/businesses, two multi-family residences, and one area with several condominiums and timeshares (see Figure 8, Viewpoint 10 for an example) border directly onto SR 28 in the project area. These residences have direct views of the project site either across open driveways or through existing vegetation, and will likely be most affected by the proposed project.

Residents are likely to have moderately high sensitivity to visual changes due to close proximity to the project site and a high sense of ownership over views from their residences.

Recreational Users

Recreational users who would view the proposed project are more likely to seek the project area for its unique visual qualities and regard the natural and built surroundings as a holistic visual experience. Recreational users include visitors of miniature golf, the Kings Beach State Recreation Area, boaters at the adjoining boat launch, and watercraft renters as well as tourist patrons of various Kings Beach gift shops, restaurants, and motels, lodges, and cottages.

Recreational users seeking more active activities such as miniature golf or water sports are likely to be more transitory, distant from the project site, and focused on the particular activity while tourist patrons are likely to walk, eat, and shop along the project site and will be more affected by the proposed project. Therefore, recreational users are likely to have moderate to moderately high sensitivity to visual changes at the project site.

Businesses

The project site is primarily lined by businesses directly facing SR 28. These businesses depend largely upon tourism, and tourists visit the area largely because of its scenic beauty. Therefore, the proposed project's cumulative effect upon the area's scenic beauty is likely to directly affect businesses.

Due to their direct relationship to the project site's scenic beauty, businesses within view of the project site are likely to have moderately high sensitivity to visual changes.

Roadway Travelers

Travelers use roadways at varying speeds; normal highway and roadway speeds differ based on the traveler's familiarity with the route and roadway conditions (i.e., presence or absence of rain or snow); however, the posted speed limit within the project site is 30 mph. Views on the western half of the project site are shorter in duration and distance due to the slightly higher amount of activity and the gradual curve in the roadway while views in the eastern half are slightly more expansive on the straighter stretch of highway.

Motorists traveling along SR 28 include area residents, commuters, tourists, and park users from the region and beyond. Viewers such as residents and commuters who frequently travel these routes generally possess moderate visual sensitivity to their surroundings. The passing landscape becomes familiar to these viewers, and their attention typically is not focused on the passing views but on the roadway, roadway signs, surrounding traffic, and pedestrian activity. Viewers who travel local routes for their scenic quality generally possess a higher visual sensitivity to their surroundings because they are likely to respond to the natural environment with a high regard and as a holistic visual experience.

Viewer sensitivity is moderate among most roadway travelers anticipated to view the action area. The passing landscape becomes familiar to frequent viewers while tourists are likely to be more sensitive at standard roadway speeds. Further, at these speeds, expansive views are of somewhat limited duration and roadway users are fleetingly aware of surrounding traffic, road signs, their immediate surroundings within the automobile, and other visual features.

Environmental Consequences

Standards for Determining Significance under NEPA

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) criteria for determining significance are listed in Title 40, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Section 1508.27, but are considered broader and less stringent than California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) criteria, set forth below. Also, the CEQA criteria below incorporate NEPA standards. For these reasons, identification of impacts as significant under CEQA is treated herein as sufficient for identifying impacts considered significant under NEPA. Mitigation measures set forth to minimize CEQA significant impacts are presumed to also mitigate NEPA significant impacts. These assumptions are made only for the purpose of identifying the magnitude of particular impacts; this document complies with NEPA requirements and uses the CEQA analysis only as a source of supporting information.

Standards for Determining Significance under CEQA

Under State CEQA Guidelines a proposed action would have a significant environmental effect on visual resources if it would:

- have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista;
- substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway;
- substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings; or
- create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime public views.

These four guidelines were used as a framework for analysis; however, the TRPA criteria for evaluating impacts are used as the threshold for determining significance.

Criteria for Determining Significance under the TRPA

The TRPA Scenic Quality Improvement Program (SQIP) guidelines were used to determine whether the proposed action would have a significant environmental effect. The proposed project action may have a significant effect on visual resources and potentially can be denied if the ratings for scenic resources indicators are lowered by the proposed project. Especially in units that are in non-attainment or at risk, it is also expected that each project must seek to improve pre-project conditions, therefore, improving existing threshold ratings. These thresholds are described under “Regulatory Setting.”

Tahoe Regional Planning Agency 2001 Threshold Evaluation Draft Standards

Context-Based Standards

According to the TRPA, numerical standards are drawn from the context of other numerical ratings.

> Although a numerical standard to assess threshold attainment for community design does not exist, it is possible to draw conclusions from other numerical ratings (TRPA 2002).

Types of Improvements Affecting Scores

The most dramatic improvements in 2001 were seen in the South Lake Tahoe Redevelopment Area.

> Removal of degraded structures, improvement in architectural quality of new and remodeled structures, increased landscaping and landscaped open space, decreases in highway curb cuts, and improved signage have all contributed to a remarkable transformation.

Improvements similar to the proposed project were seen east of Unit 20B.

> The North Stateline Beautification project in Washoe County has resulted in improved scenic quality in the built environment with the construction of a sidewalk and landscaping project (TRPA 2002).

The single most dramatic numerical improvement was four points.

> Overall, roadway travel route scores improved in 16 units with a total improvement of 22.5 points. Of these, 5.5 points result, in whole or in part, from reassessment of previous scores. The most dramatic improvement, four points, was realized in Unit 33-The Strip (TRPA 2002).

Expected Threshold Attainment for Unit 20B

Unit 20B was expected to produce scores closer to attainment near 2007.

> Considering existing trends and planning efforts, and the scope of needed improvements to reach attainment, the following roadway units are positioned to reach attainment in the fairly short-term: Unit 18, Carnelian Bay, and Unit 25, Crystal Bay. In addition, continued improvements in Unit 20B, Kings Beach and Unit 33, The Strip are underway and may produce scores much closer to attainment within the next five years (TRPA 2002).

Methods and Assumptions for the Effect Analysis

The analysis of potential effects on visual resources and aesthetics is based on field observations of the project action area and surroundings and review of the following:

- engineering data and drawings for the proposed action and for the Project,
- aerial and ground-level photographs of the action area,
- conceptual computer-generated visual simulations from representative viewpoints, and
- relevant planning documents.

The simulations depict the visual effects of Alternatives 2, 3, 4, and 5 (see Appendix B). The simulations include landscaping, which is not presently part of the project description; however, the simulations help to give a general idea of how the lane widening under each alternative—particularly the appearance of the lane and sidewalk widths.

For purposes of this analysis, the TRPA thresholds of significance apply.

Impact Discussion

CEQA Checklist Impacts

Impact VIS-1: Temporary Visual Impacts Caused by Construction Activities (Less Than Significant)

Alternatives 2, 3, 4, and 5

Construction activities in the project area would create temporary changes in views of and from the action area. While construction activities would take place over an eight to ten-month period of time split over two years, construction of project elements would be intermittent and temporary. Construction activities associated with the proposed project would introduce considerable heavy equipment and associated vehicles, including dozers, graders, and trucks into the viewshed of all viewer groups. The proposed action would result in short-term visual effects.

All viewer groups would be affected by this change in visual quality, although the effect would vary in degree depending on the viewer location and sensitivity. The most affected viewers would be residents and businesses adjacent to the roadway. Impacts on these residences and businesses are considered adverse because they would experience a short-term change in the visual character of their views. However, construction activities are temporary, and all viewer groups in the action area and vicinity are accustomed to seeing construction activities and equipment from other local construction activities.

This effect is considered less than significant because construction activities are intermittent and temporary and all viewer groups in the action area and vicinity are accustomed to seeing construction activities and equipment. Additionally, construction activities would be limited to the hours of 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

No Action

Under these scenarios, no construction-related visual effects would occur. No mitigation is required.

Impact VIS-2: Adversely Affect a Scenic Vista (Less Than Significant)

Alternatives 2, 3, 4, and 5

Each proposed alternative includes 5-foot bicycle lanes and improved sidewalks extending the length of the project area from east to west. Each alternative also includes improved bicycle and pedestrian crosswalks across SR 28 as well as aesthetic improvements such as new streetlights, benches, transit facilities, planters, bicycle racks, trash receptacles, and additional landscaping.

These common proposed project actions would have a variable effect based on viewer group and location within the landscape. Residents (private views) and businesses would experience the greatest effect, whereas recreationists and roadway travelers (public views) would experience less change in viewshed.

The project site is located within Unit 20B, which has a travel route rating that is below the established threshold attainment rating.

Consistent sidewalks, curbs, and roadway markings would lessen overall distractions for motorists. These impacts would have minimal impacts to views of Lake Tahoe and ridgelines within the roadway viewshed to the east or west. Therefore, these impacts common to all alternatives are considered less than significant.

Alternative 1, No Action

Under this scenario, no visual effects would occur. No mitigation is required.

Alternative 2

Alternative 2 consists of a three-lane cross-section and no on-street parking during the summer on either side of SR 28, with roundabouts at Bear Street and Coon Street. A sub-alternative also involves adding a traffic circle at the intersection with SR 267. An 18-foot sidewalk/planting area would be provided in both directions.

The proposed traffic circles would remove obstructing traffic signals from the roadway viewshed to the east and west while they would also cause motorists to be slightly more spatially aware of traffic at intersections. Limiting on-street parking during the summer would also remove the obstruction to views of Lake Tahoe for businesses, recreationists, and motorists and remove a distraction to

motorists. Therefore, the proposed changes in Alternative 2 would not adversely affect scenic vistas and are considered less than significant.

Alternative 3

Alternative 3 consists of four-lane cross-section and on-street parking along both sides of SR 28, with traffic signals at SR 267, Bear Street, and Coon Street. Left turn lanes would be provided on SR 28 at Fox Street. A minimum 5.4-foot wide sidewalk would be provided in both directions.

The proposed minimal changes in Alternative 3 would not adversely affect scenic vistas and are considered less than significant.

Alternative 4

Alternative 4 is identical to Alternative 2, except that on-street parking would be prohibited over the entire year (including winter).

The proposed traffic circles would remove obstructing traffic signals from the roadway viewshed to the east and west. Limiting on-street parking over the entire year would further remove the obstruction to views of Lake Tahoe for businesses, recreationists, and motorists. Therefore, the proposed changes in Alternative 4 would not adversely affect scenic vistas and are considered less than significant.

Alternative 5

Alternative 5 consists of two travel lanes westbound on SR 28 with adjacent on-street parking, a center turn lane, a single eastbound through lane without adjacent on-street parking (year-round), and roundabouts at Bear Street, and Coon Street. A sub-alternative also involves adding a traffic circle at the intersection with SR 267. A 10-foot sidewalk/planting area would be provided in both directions.

Limiting on-street parking to only the north side of the highway would somewhat remove the obstruction to views of Lake Tahoe for businesses, recreationists, and motorists. Therefore, the proposed changes in Alternative 5 would not adversely affect scenic vistas and are considered less than significant.

Impact VIS-3: Damage Scenic Resources Along a Scenic Highway (No Impact)

While SR 28 is an eligible state scenic highway, California currently does not officially designate it a state scenic highway. The state of Nevada does list SR 28 as a Nevada State Scenic Byway but the east end of the proposed project is more than 0.75 mile from the Nevada border. Therefore, the proposed project would not damage scenic resources along a scenic highway and there would be no impacts.

Impact VIS-4: Degrade the Existing Visual Character or Quality of the Site and Its Surroundings (Less Than Significant)

Each proposed alternative includes 5-foot bicycle lanes and improved sidewalks extending the length of the project area from east to west. Each alternative also includes improved bicycle and pedestrian crosswalks across SR 28 as well as aesthetic improvements such as new streetlights, benches, transit facilities, planters, bicycle racks, trash receptacles, and additional landscaping.

These common proposed project actions would have a variable effect based on viewer group and location within the landscape. Residents (private views) and businesses would experience the greatest effect, whereas recreationists and roadway travelers (public views) would experience less change in viewshed.

Alternative 2

Alternative 2 consists of a three-lane cross-section and no on-street parking during the summer on either side of SR 28, with roundabouts at Bear Street and Coon Street. A sub-alternative also involves adding a traffic circle at the intersection with SR 267. An 18-foot sidewalk/planting area would be provided in both directions.

Reducing the number of lanes, removing on-street parking in the summer, and adding an expansive sidewalk would improve the overall visual quality on SR 28. However, reducing the number of lanes would potentially increase the number of vehicles in each lane at any one time, creating a slightly higher distraction for motorists. Overall, the proposed changes in Alternative 2 are considered less than significant.

Alternative 3

Alternative 3 consists of a four-lane cross-section and on-street parking along both sides of SR 28, with traffic signals at SR 267, Bear Street, and Coon Street. Left turn lanes would be provided on SR 28 at Fox Street. A minimum 5.4-foot wide sidewalk would be provided in both directions.

Adding sidewalks and left turn lanes at Fox Street would reduce motorist distractions somewhat. The proposed changes in Alternative 3 are considered less than significant.

Alternative 4

Alternative 4 is identical to Alternative 2, except that on-street parking would be prohibited over the entire year (including winter).

Reducing the number of lanes, removing on-street parking over the entire year, and adding an expansive sidewalk would improve the overall visual quality on SR 28. However, reducing the number of lanes would potentially increase the number of vehicles in each lane at any one time, creating a slightly higher distraction for motorists. Overall though, the proposed changes in Alternative 4 are considered less than significant.

Alternative 5

Alternative 5 consists of two travel lanes westbound on SR 28 with adjacent on-street parking, a center turn lane, a single eastbound through lane without adjacent on-street parking (year-round), and roundabouts at Bear Street, and Coon Street. A sub-alternative also involves adding a traffic circle at the intersection with SR 267. A 10-foot sidewalk/planting area would be provided in both directions.

Reducing the number of lanes, reducing on-street parking, and adding a wide sidewalk would improve the overall visual quality on SR 28. However, reducing the number of lanes would potentially increase the number of vehicles in each lane at any one time, creating a slightly higher distraction for motorists. Overall, the proposed changes in Alternative 5 are considered less than significant.

Impact VIS-5: Create a New Source of Light and Glare that Affects Views in the Area (Less Than Significant)

Alternatives 2, 3, 4, and 5

Alternatives 2, 3, 4, and 5 each propose replacing existing standard tall galvanized steel streetlights, presumably with a larger number of shorter lights, each with a more narrow spread of light.

Nighttime Light

This lighting plan is expected to be slightly less obtrusive and overall more pleasing for nighttime views of the area. Further, Alternative 5 would reduce the existing number of primary traffic lanes by one and Alternatives 2 and 4 would reduce the number of primary traffic lanes by two, which would reduce the impacts of vehicle headlights at any one time on SR 28. Thus, all action alternatives are considered less than significant. While the impact is considered less than significant, implementing Mitigation Measures VIS-1 and VIS-2 would improve the aesthetics of the proposed project area.

Daytime and Nighttime Glare

The proposed project would presumably replace chrome-colored streetlights with shorter earth-toned materials that would provide less daytime and nighttime glare. Therefore, all action alternatives are considered less than significant. While the impact is considered less than significant, implementing Mitigation Measure VIS-3 would improve the aesthetics of the proposed project area.

No Action

Under this scenario, no light or glare effects would occur. No mitigation is required.

Impact VIS-6: Conflict with Policies or Goals Related to Visual Resources (No Impact)

Alternatives 2, 3, 4, and 5
Under these scenarios, no conflict with policies or goals would occur. No mitigation is required.

No Action
Under this scenario, no conflict with policies or goals would occur. No mitigation is required.

Specific Unit Impacts

The potential changes resulting from the proposed project to existing travel route ratings and scenic quality ratings of each of the following units are summarized in Tables 3 and 4 (below), respectively.

Impact VIS-7: Permanent Changes to Views in Roadway Unit 20B—Kings Beach (No Impact)

Alternatives 2, 4, and 5
Alternatives 2, 4, and 5 would reduce the number of primary traffic lanes, reduce or eliminate on-street parking, and add traffic circles that would improve the visual quality of SR 28 with landscaping in the center of motorists' views. Thus, Alternatives 2, 4, and 5 would increase the 2001 Travel Route Rating "Road Structure" score from 1 to 3 and would increase the "Roadway Distractions" score from 2 to 2.5 with all other scores remaining the same. This would result in an increase of 2.5 points for a total Travel Route Rating of 15.

The proposed project would increase the 2001 Scenic Quality Rating "Intactness" score from 2 to 3 with all other scores remaining the same. This would result in an increase of 1 point for a total Scenic Quality Rating of 10.

Alternative 3
Alternative 3 would improve the existing highway shoulder treatment with 5.4-foot wide sidewalks and improved highway fixtures. However, the number of primary traffic lanes and on-street parking would not be reduced and traffic circles would not be added for improved visual quality. Therefore, Alternative 3 would increase the 2001 Travel Route Rating "Road Structure" score from 1 to 2.5 and would increase the "Roadway Distractions" score from 2 to 2.5 with all other scores remaining the same. This would result in an increase of 2 points for a total Travel Route Rating of 14.5.

Alternative 3 would increase the 2001 Scenic Quality Rating "Intactness" score from 2 to 3 with all other scores remaining the same. This would result in an increase of 1 point for a total Scenic Quality Rating of 10.

Impact VIS-7: Permanent Changes to Views in Roadway Unit 40—Brockway Cutoff (No Impact)

The proposed project would result in no changes in Travel Route Rating or Scenic Quality Rating scores.

Impact VIS-8: Permanent Changes to Views in Shoreline Unit 21—Agate Bay (No Impact)

The proposed project would result in no changes in Travel Route Rating or Scenic Quality Rating scores.

Impact VIS-9: Permanent Changes to Views in Shoreline Unit 22—Brockway (No Impact)

The proposed project would result in no changes in Travel Route Rating or Scenic Quality Rating scores.

Impact VIS-10: Permanent Changes to Views in Recreation Unit 9—Kings Beach (No Impact)

The proposed project would result in no changes in Travel Route Rating or Scenic Quality Rating scores.

Table 3. 2001 Travel Route Rating Changes Resulting from the Proposed Project

	2001 Travel Route Rating (TRPA 2002)	Rating Change from the Proposed Project
Roadway Units		
20B—Kings Beach	12.5	15*
40—Brockway Cutoff	15	n/a
Shoreline Units		
21—Agate Bay	8	n/a
22—Brockway	9	n/a
Recreation Area		
9—Kings Beach	n/a	n/a

*Alternative 3 would change the Unit 20B score to 14.5.

Table 4. 2001 Scenic Quality Rating Changes Resulting from the Proposed Project

	2001 Scenic Quality Rating	Rating Change from the Proposed Project
Roadway Units		
20B—Kings Beach	9	10
40—Brockway Cutoff	8	n/a
Shoreline Units		
21—Agate Bay	8	n/a
22—Brockway	9	n/a
Recreation Area		
9—Kings Beach	12	n/a

Mitigation Measures

The proposed action incorporates the following mitigation measures to minimize visual resources impacts. Mitigation Measure VIS-1 and VIS-3 are from the TRPA Design Review Guidelines 1989.

Mitigation Measure VIS-1: Lighting Levels

Avoid consistent overall lighting and overly bright lighting. The location of lighting should respond to the anticipated use and should not exceed the amount of light actually required by users. Lighting for pedestrian movement should illuminate entrances, changes in grade, path intersections, and other areas along paths which, if left unlit, would cause the user to feel insecure. As a general rule of thumb, one foot candle per square foot over the entire project area is adequate. Lighting suppliers and manufacturers have lighting design handbooks which can be consulted to determine fixture types, illumination needs and light standard heights.

Mitigation Measure VIS-2: Directed Lighting

Lights will be screened and directed away from residences to the highest degree possible and the amount of nighttime lights used will be minimized to the highest degree possible. In particular, lighting shall employ shielding to minimize off-site light spill and glare. In addition:

- Luminaire spacing should be the maximum allowable for traffic safety.
- Luminaires should be cutoff-type fixtures that cast low-angle illumination to minimize incidental spillover of light onto adjacent private properties and

undeveloped open space. Fixtures that project upward or horizontally should not be used.

- Luminaires should be directed toward the roadway and away from adjacent residences and open space areas.
- Luminaire lamps should provide good color rendering and natural light qualities. Low-pressure and high-pressure sodium fixtures that are not color-corrected should not be used.
- Luminaire intensity should be the minimum allowable for traffic safety.
- Luminaire mountings should be downcast and the height of the poles minimized to reduce potential for backscatter into the nighttime sky and incidental spillover of light into adjacent private properties and open space.
- Luminaire mountings should have nonglare finishes.

Mitigation Measure VIS-3: Highway Fixtures with Low-Sheen and Non-Reflective Surface Materials

Guardrails and other highway fixtures, including but not limited to, retaining walls, safety barriers, traffic signals and controllers, light standards, and other structures, shall be limited to the minimum length, height, and bulk necessary to adequately provide for the safety of the highway user. Earth tone colors of dark shades and flat finish shall be used on all highway fixtures. New and replacement guardrails shall not have a shiny reflective finish. (These features are typically galvanized steel, which weathers naturally to a non-glare finish typically within a year or so.) Retaining walls and other erosion control devices or structures, shall be constructed of natural materials whenever possible and shall, to the maximum extent possible, be designed and sited as to not detract from the scenic quality of the corridor. Such structures shall incorporate heavy texture or articulated plane surfaces that create heavy shadow patterns. Adopted community plans may establish equal or superior standards for highway fixtures.

Summary of Effects and Mitigation Measures by Alternative

Table 5. Summary of Visual Effects and Mitigation Measures by Alternative

	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Alternative 4	Alternative 5	No Action
Impact 3-1: Temporary Visual Impact Caused by Construction Activities					
Quantitative Comparison	Minor, short-term construction effects	Minor, short-term construction effects	Minor, short-term construction effects	Minor, short-term construction effects	No construction
Significance before Mitigation	LS	LS	LS	LS	NE
Significance after Mitigation	LS	LS	LS	LS	NE
Mitigation Measures					
None required	X	X	X	X	X
None available					
Effect 3.5-2: Degradation of Views to SR 28					
Quantitative Comparison	No degradation of views to SR 28	No degradation of views to SR 28	No degradation of views to SR 28	No degradation of views to SR 28	No change
Significance before Mitigation	LS	LS	LS	LS	NE
Significance after Mitigation	LS	LS	LS	LS	NE
Mitigation Measures					
None required	X	X	X	X	X
None available					
Effect 3.5-3: Degradation of Views from SR 28					
Quantitative Comparison	No degradation of views from SR 28	No degradation of views from SR 28	No degradation of views from SR 28	No degradation of views from SR 28	No change
Significance before Mitigation	LS	LS	LS	LS	NE
Significance after Mitigation	LS	LS	LS	LS	NE
Mitigation Measures					
None required	X	X	X	X	
None available					
Effect 3.5-4: Create a New Source of Light and Glare that Affects Views					
Quantitative Comparison	No increase in nighttime light and glare as viewed by Kings Beach viewers	No increase in nighttime light and glare as viewed by Kings Beach viewers	No increase in nighttime light and glare as viewed by Kings Beach viewers	No increase in nighttime light and glare as viewed by Kings Beach viewers	No change

	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Alternative 4	Alternative 5	No Action
Significance before Mitigation	LS	LS	LS	LS	NE
Significance after Mitigation	LS	LS	LS	LS	NE
Mitigation Measures					
Mitigation Measure 3-1: Highway Fixtures with Low-Sheen and Non-Reflective Surface Materials	X	X	X	X	
Mitigation Measure 3-2: Lighting Levels	X	X	X	X	
Mitigation Measure 3-3: Directed Lighting	X	X	X	X	
Effect 3.5-5: Conflict with Policies or Goals Related to Visual Resources					
Quantitative Comparison	No conflict	No conflict	No conflict	No conflict	No change
Significance before Mitigation	LS	LS	LS	LS	NE
Significance after Mitigation	LS	LS	LS	LS	NE
Mitigation Measures					
None required	X	X	X	X	X
None available					

Notes:

SU = Significant and unavoidable.
S = Significant.
LS = Less than significant.
NE = No effect.

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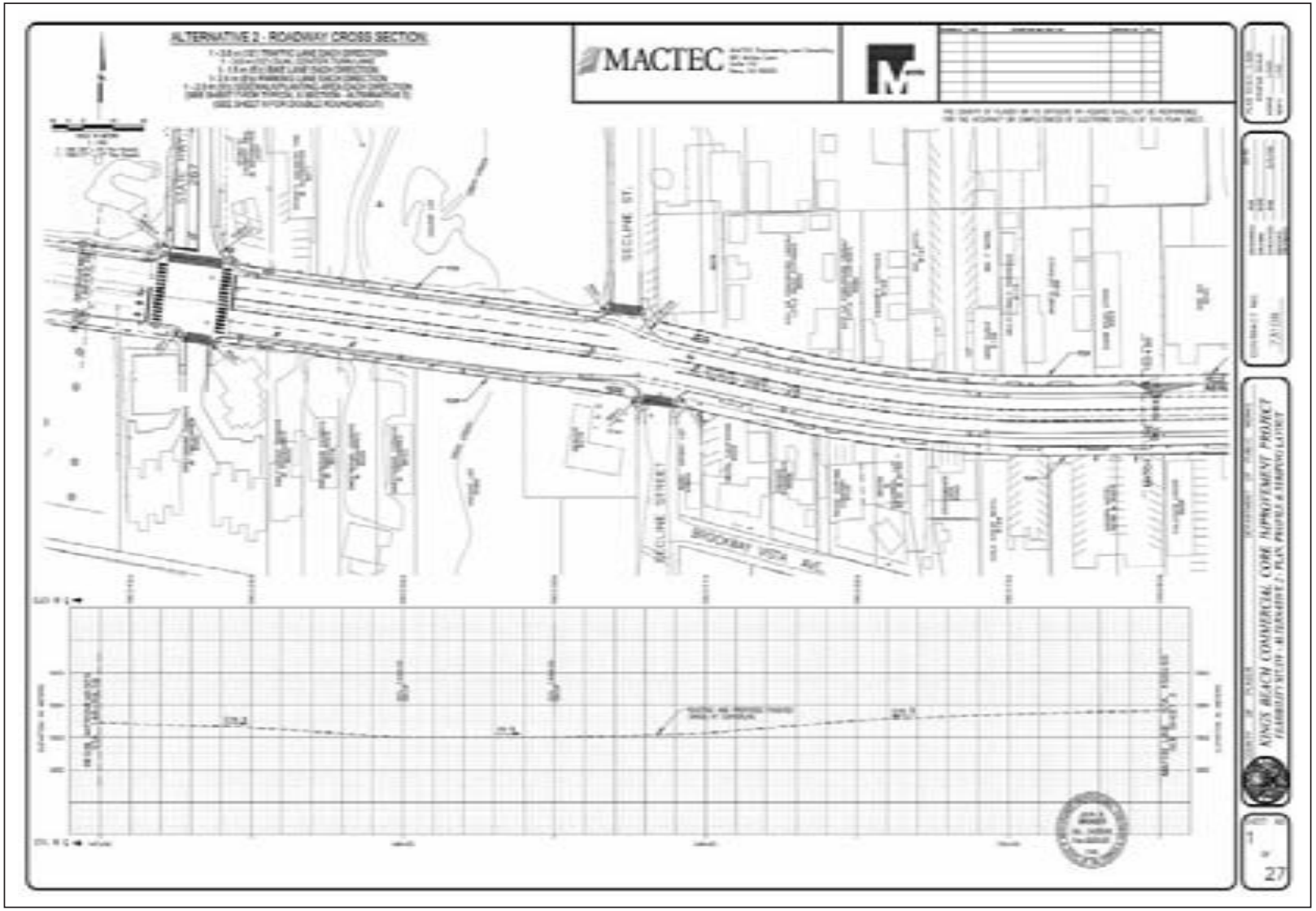
Appendix A

Alternatives 2—5: Plan, Profile & Striping Layout Drawings



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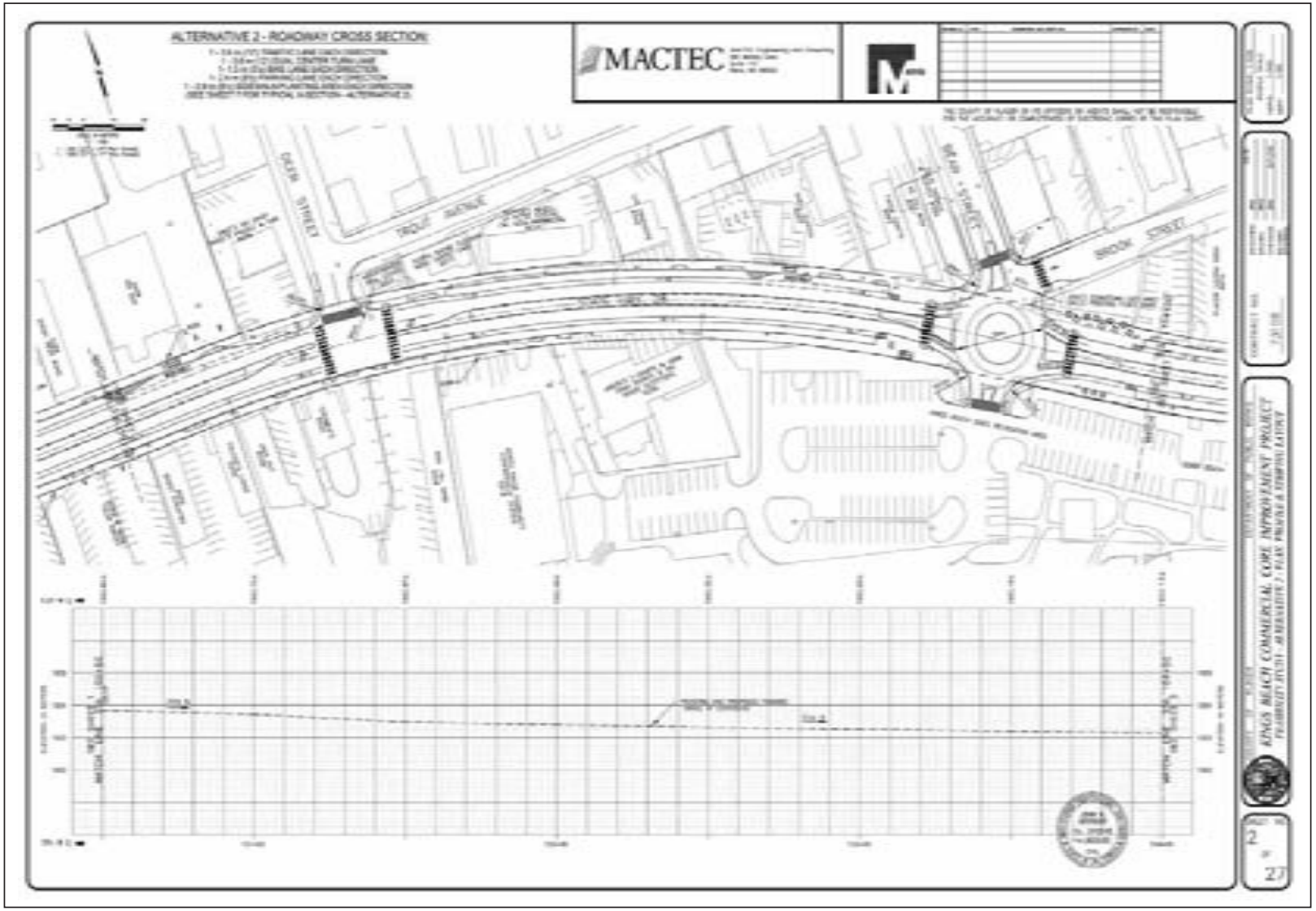
Appendix A
Alternative 2 – Sheet 1



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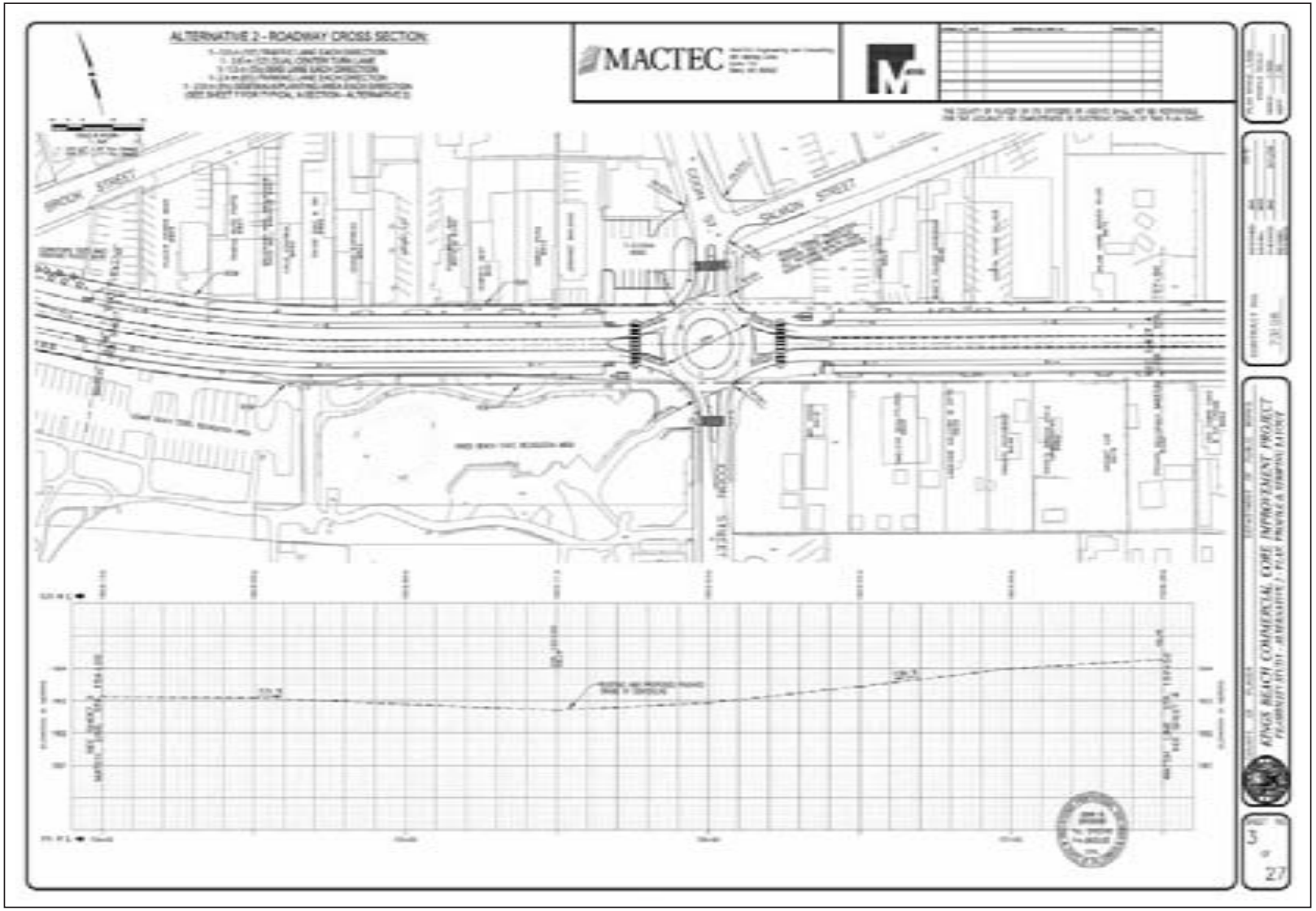
Appendix A
Alternative 2 – Sheet 2



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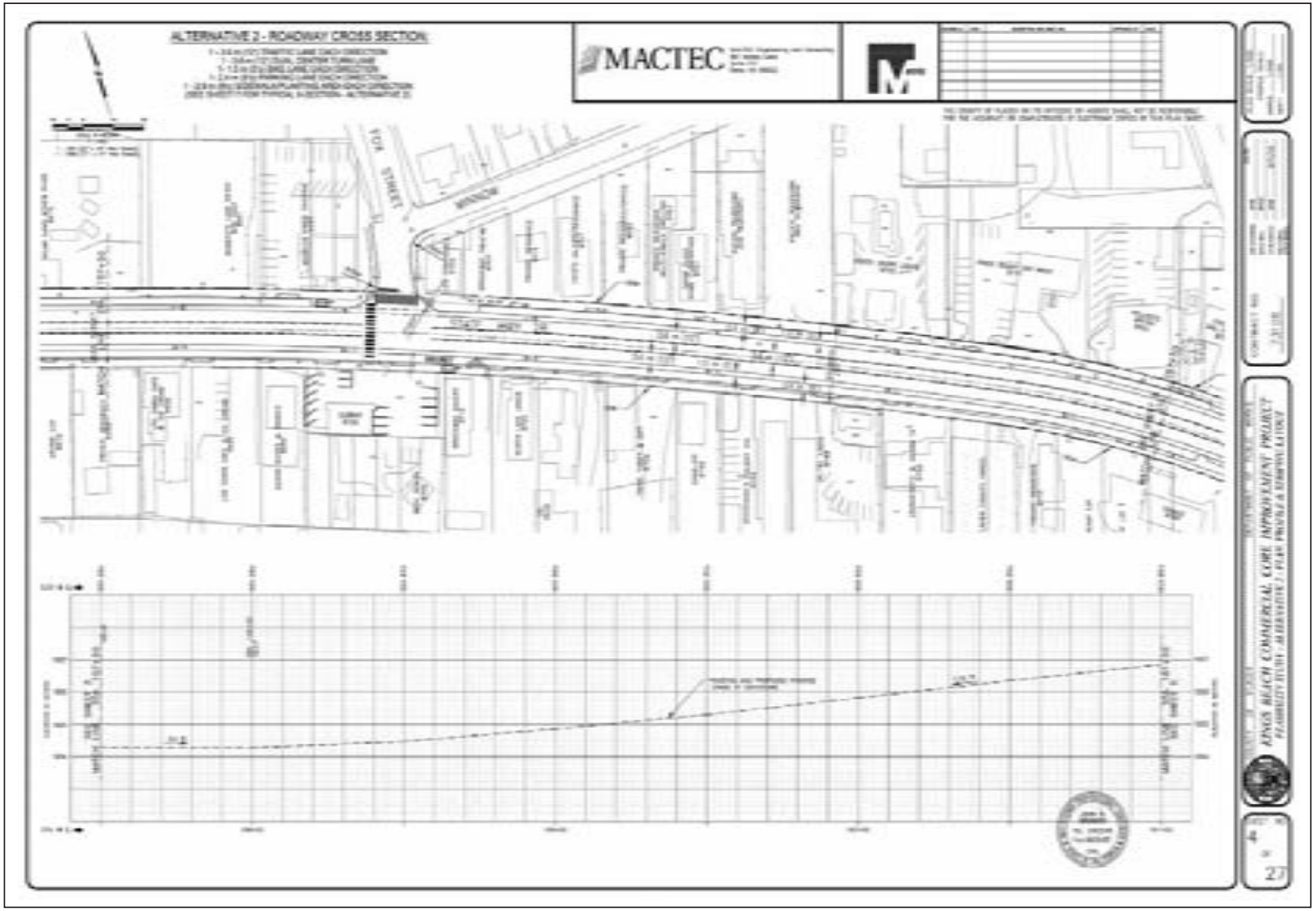
Appendix A
Alternative 2 – Sheet 3



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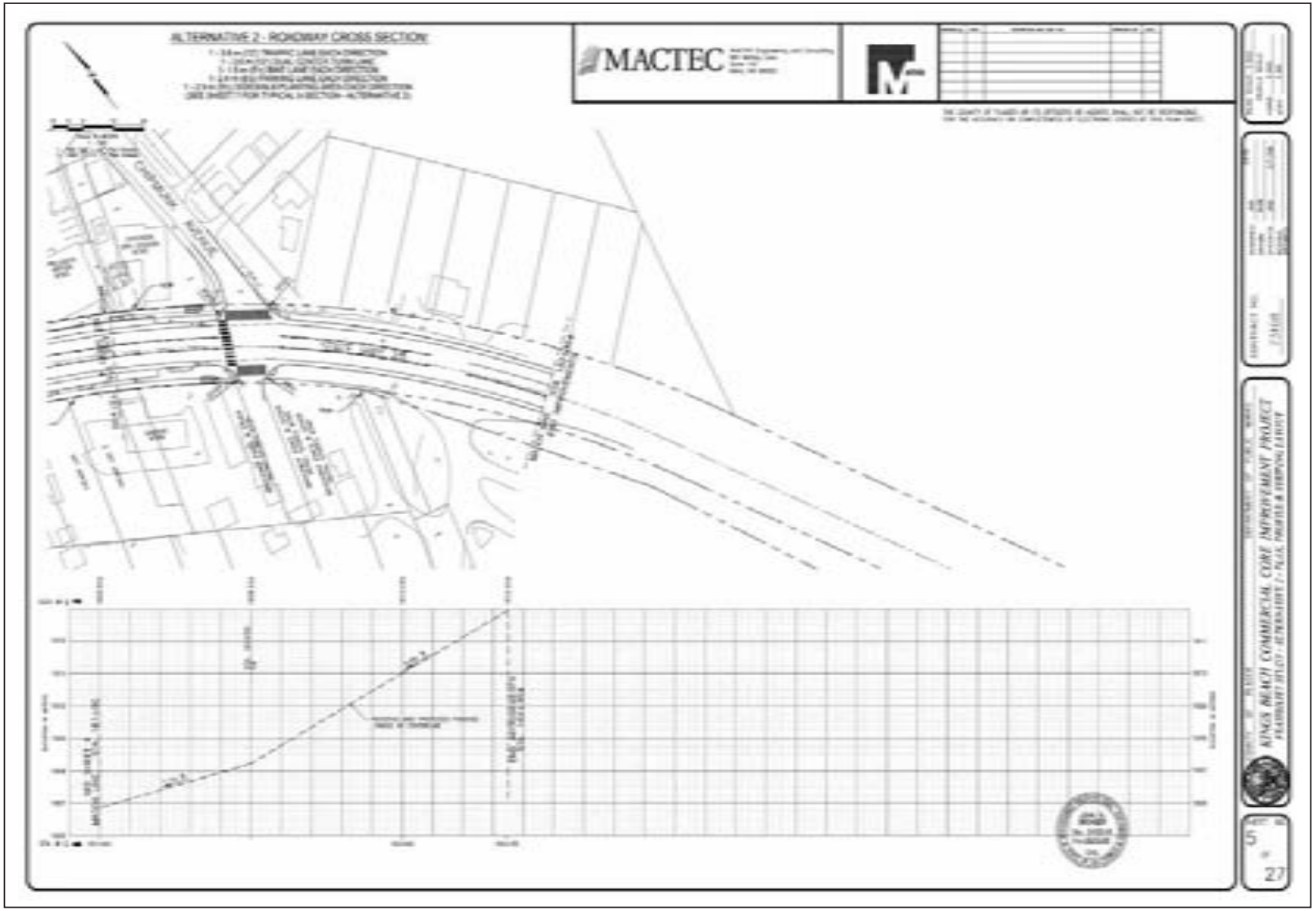
Appendix A
Alternative 2 – Sheet 4



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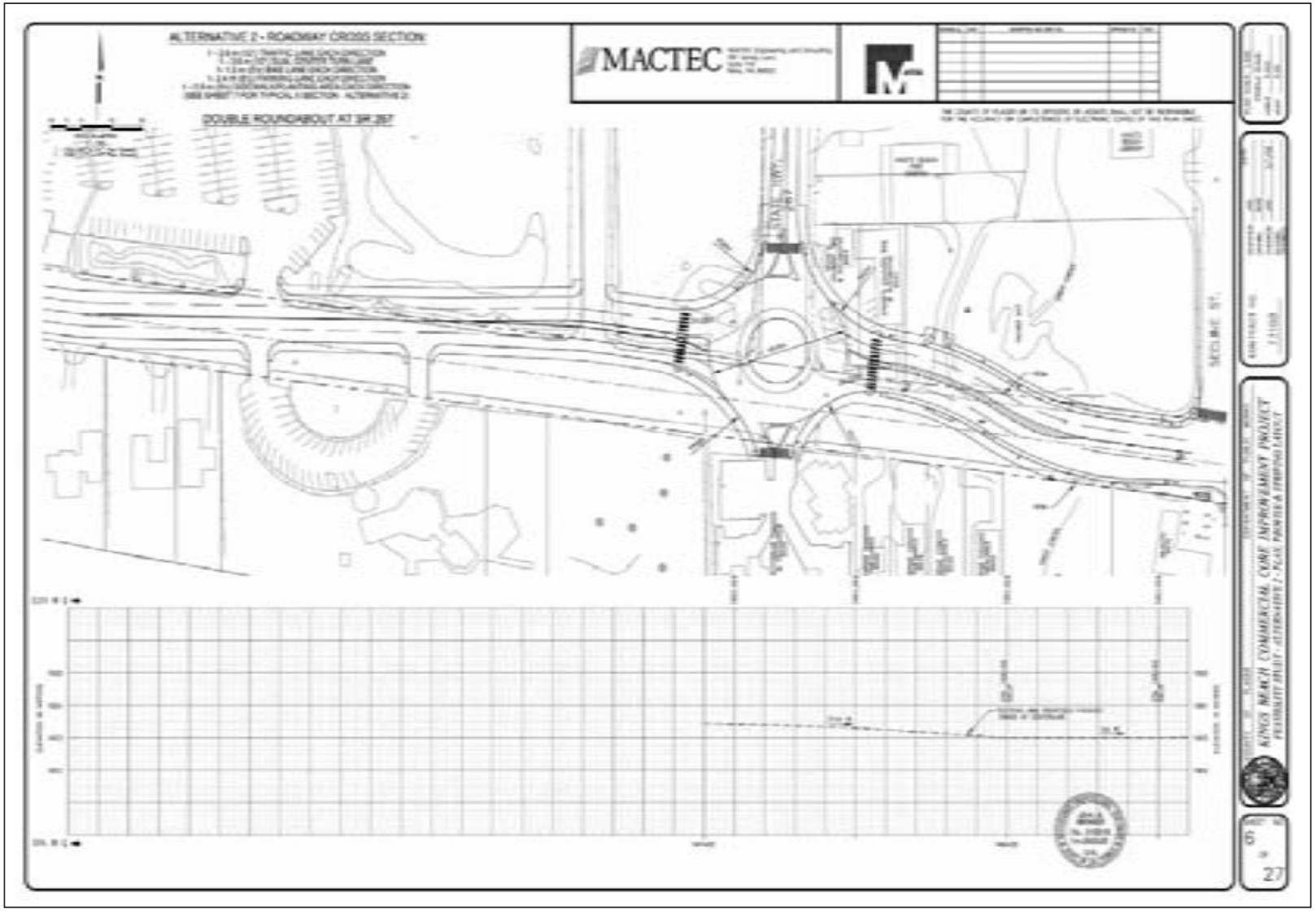
Appendix A
Alternative 2 – Sheet 5



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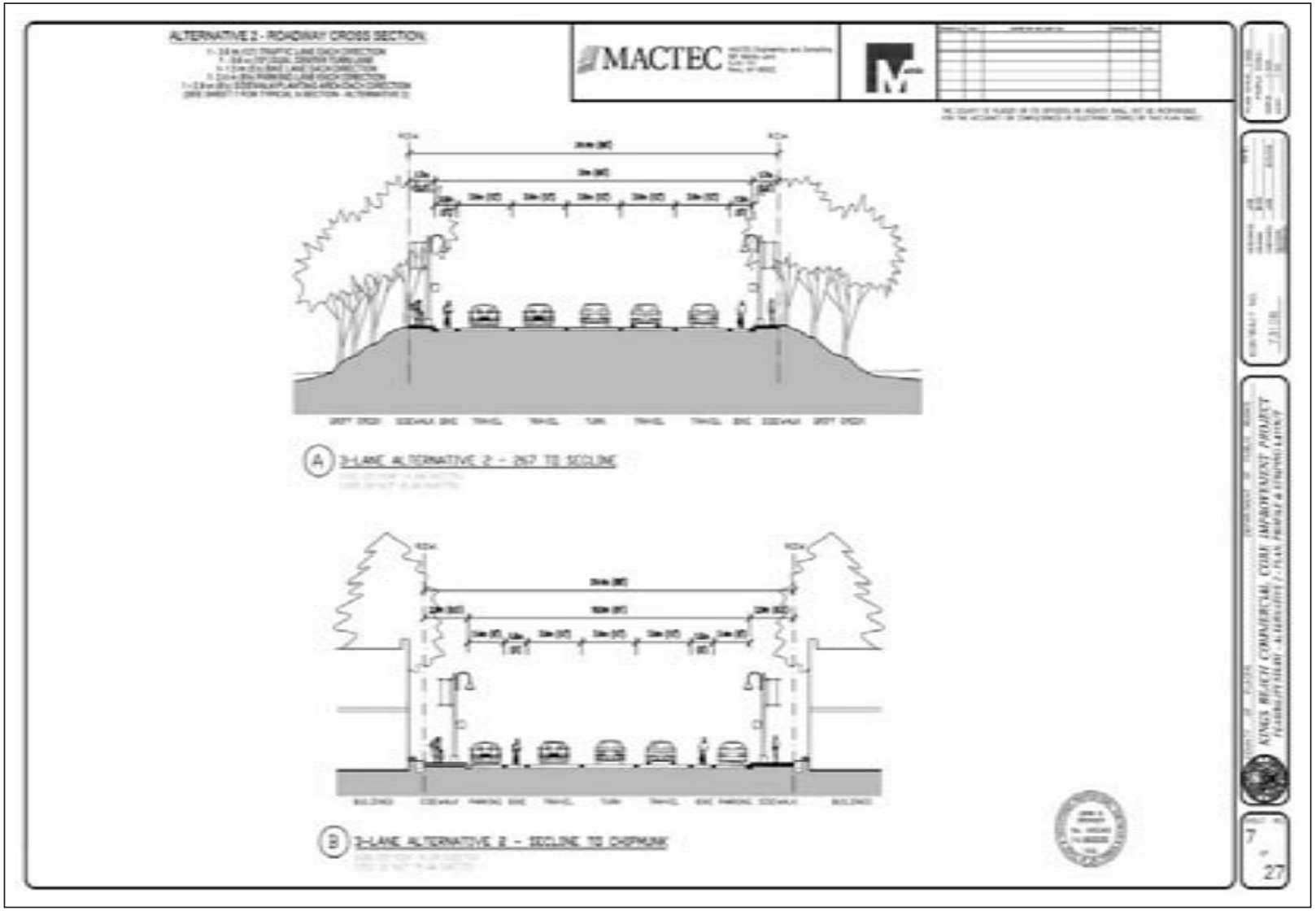
Appendix A
Alternative 2 – Sheet 6



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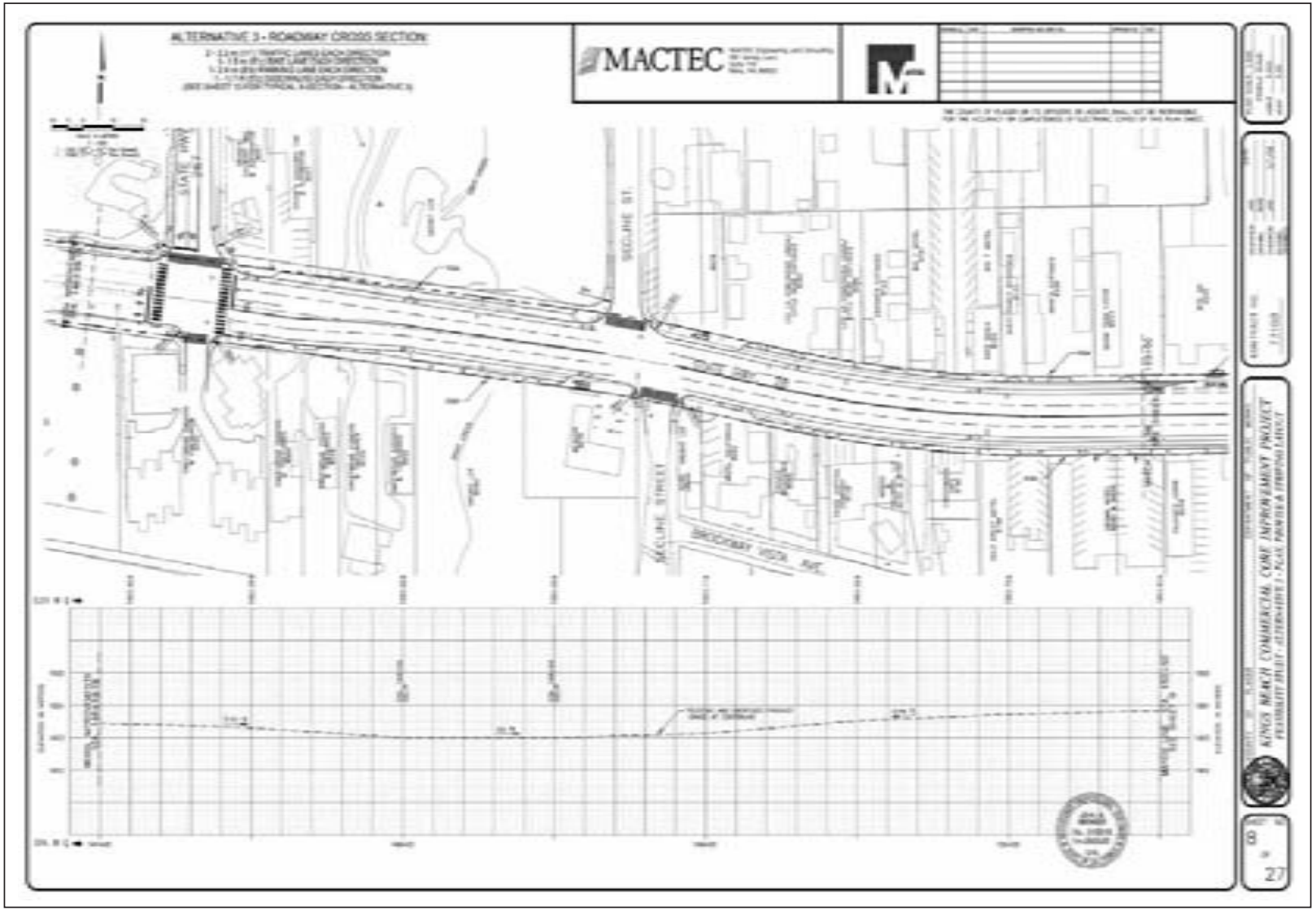
Appendix A
Alternative 2 – Sheet 7



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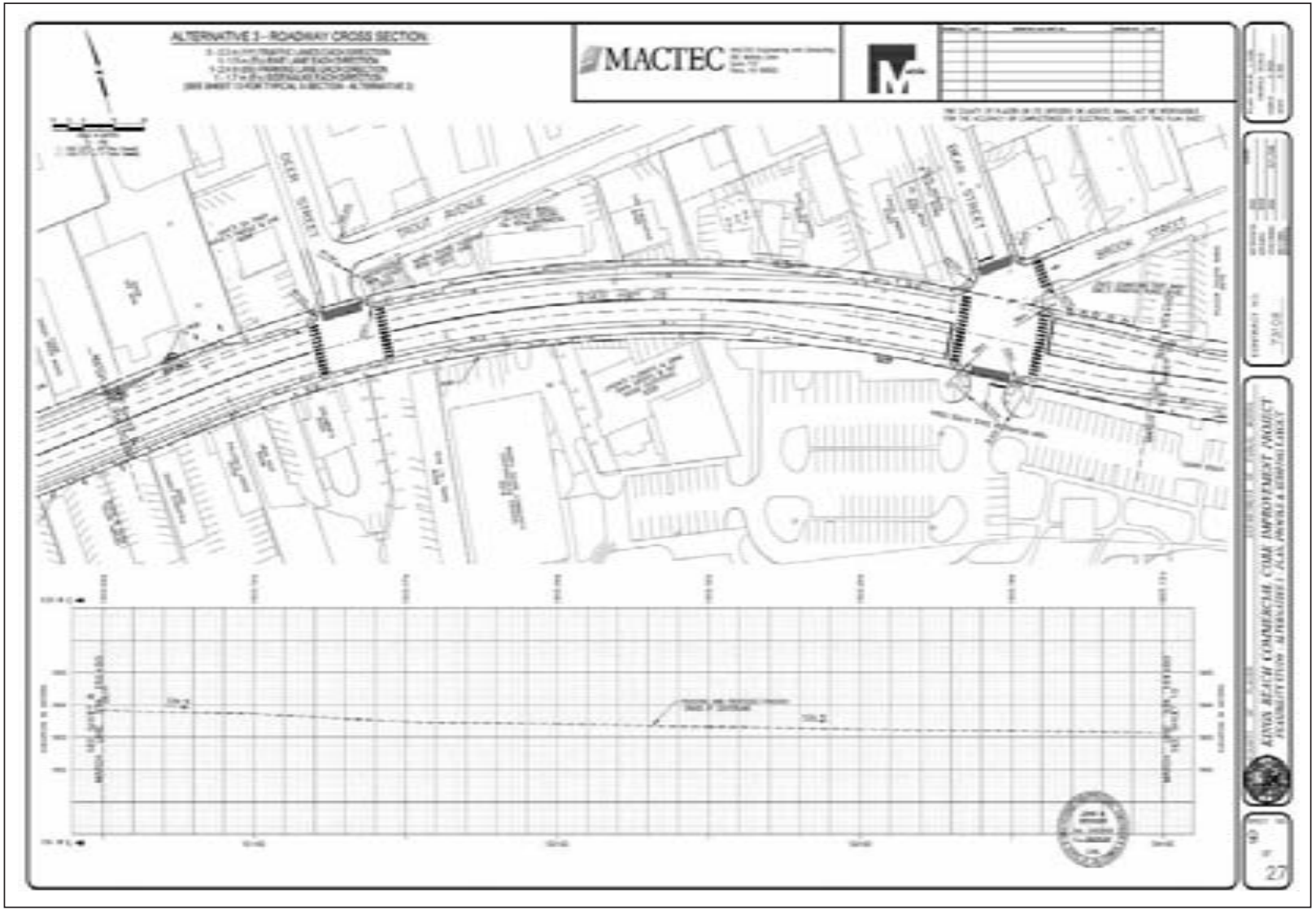
Appendix A
Alternative 3 – Sheet 1



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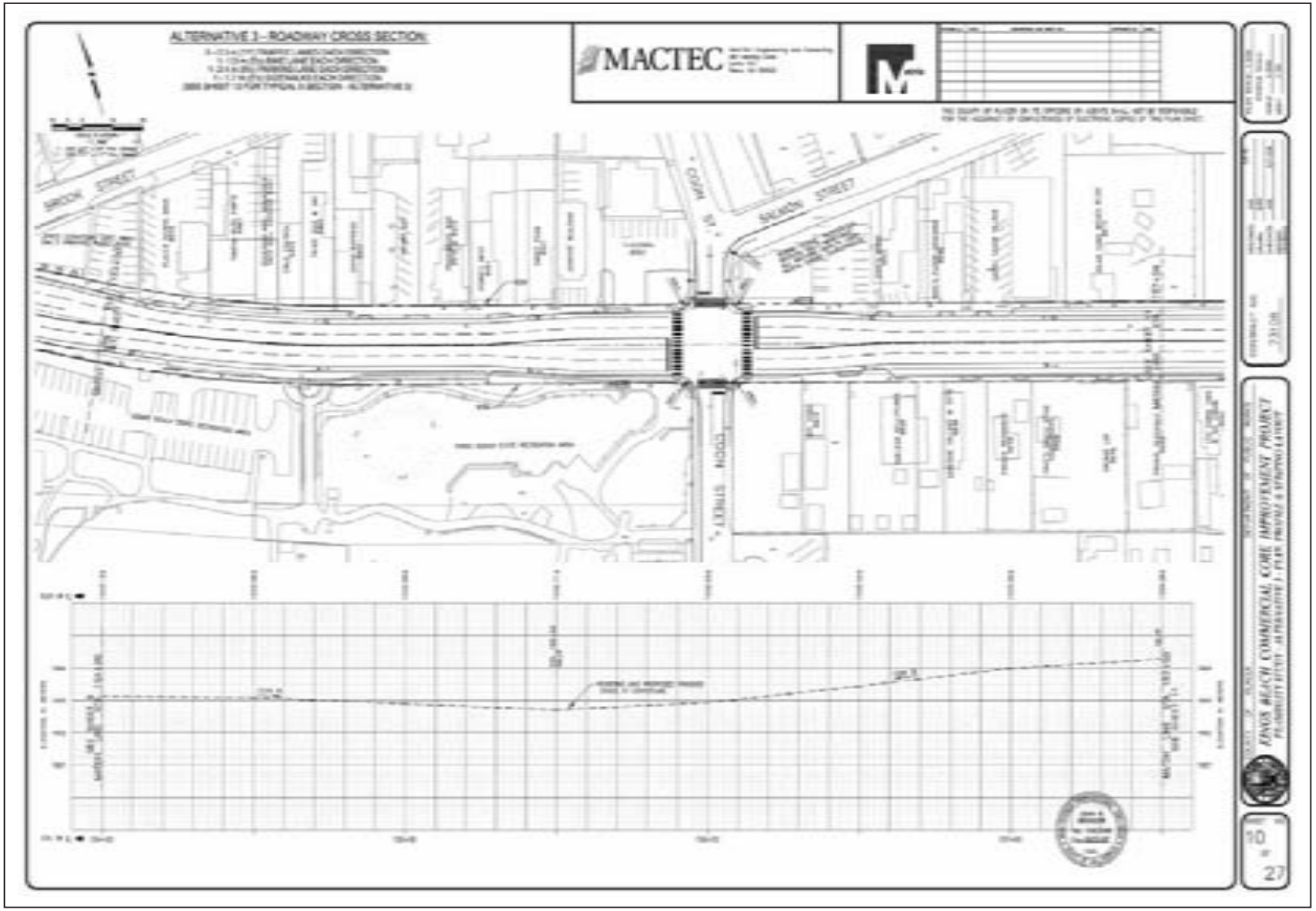
Appendix A
Alternative 3 – Sheet 2



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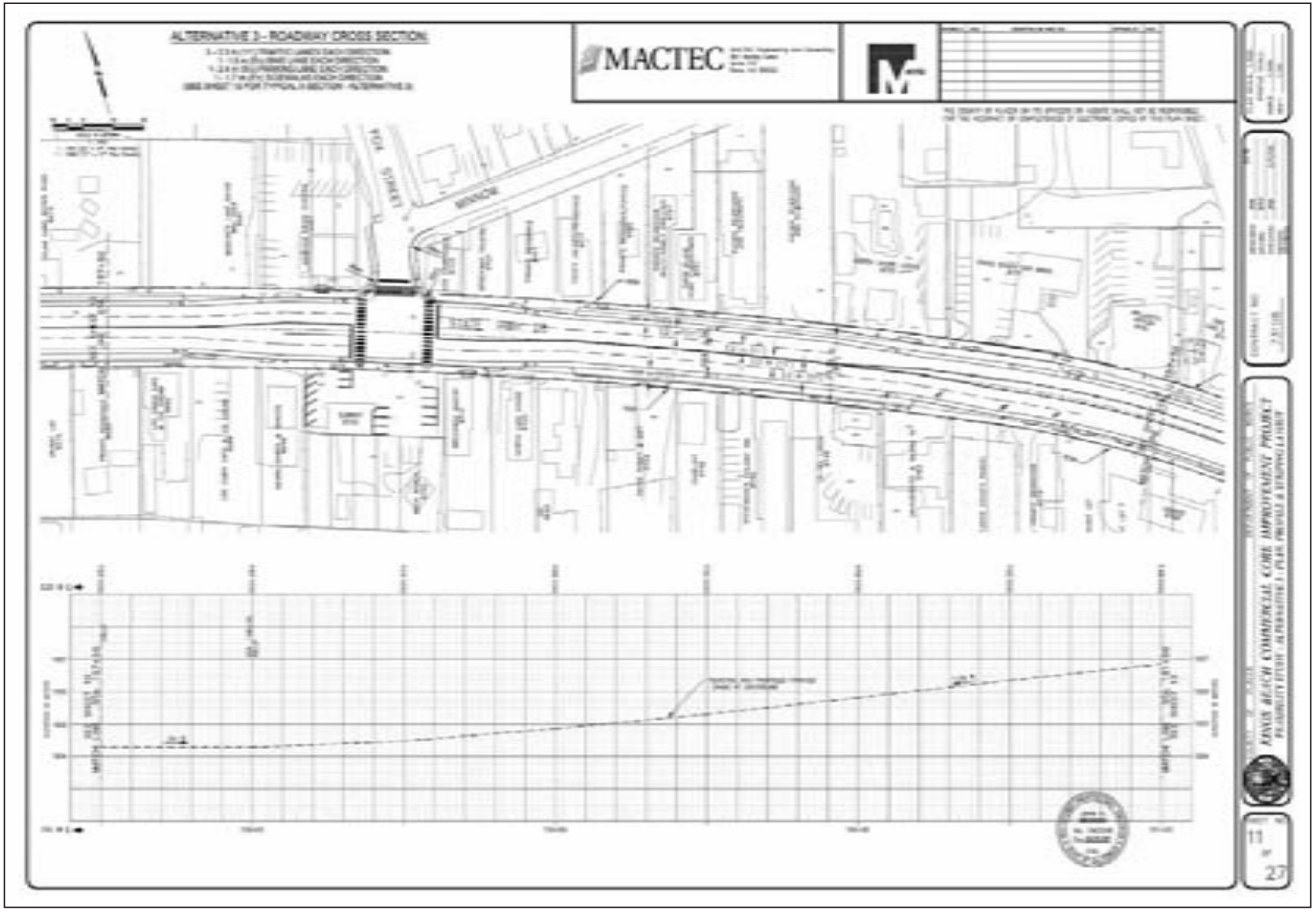
Appendix A
Alternative 3 – Sheet 3



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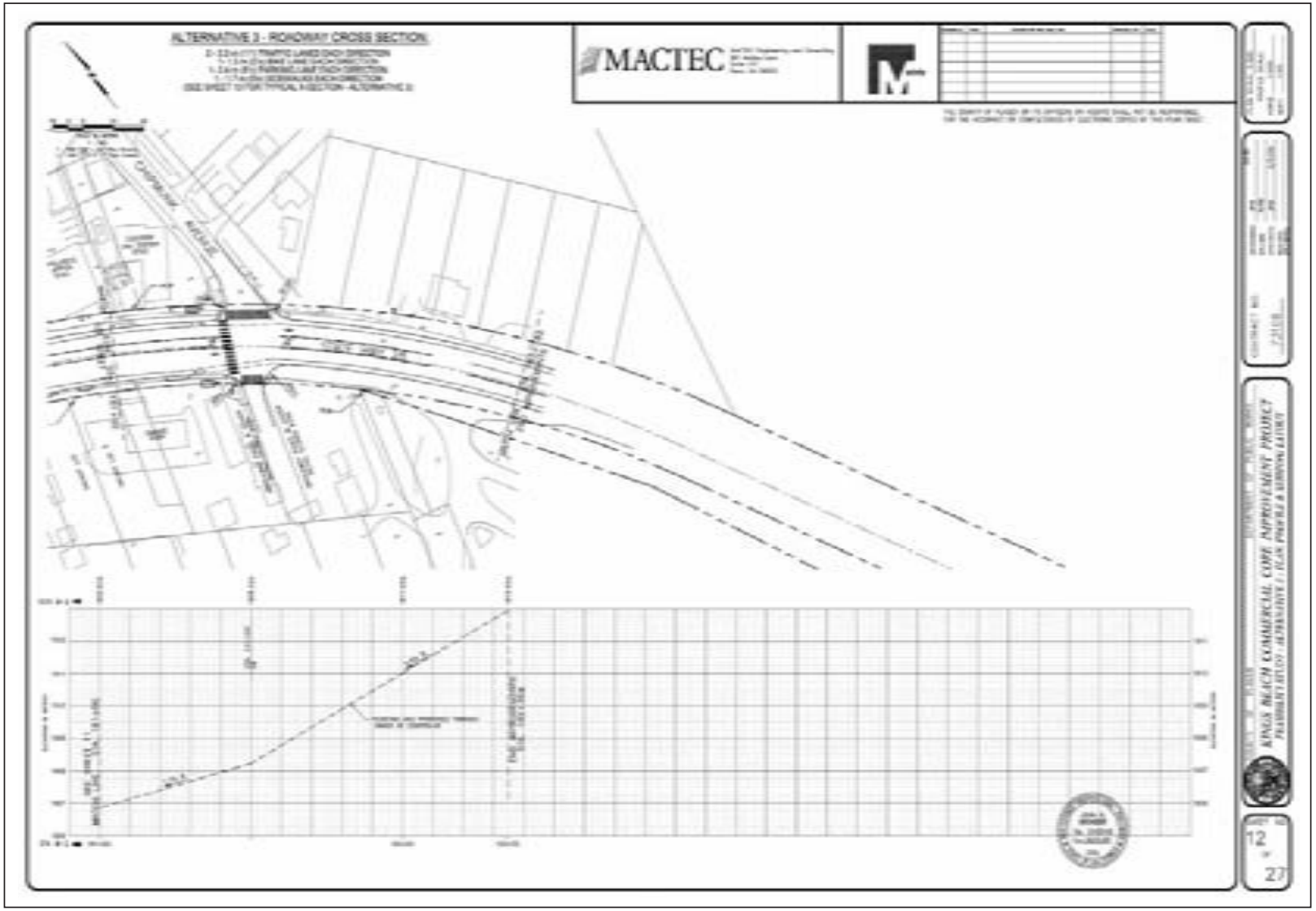
Appendix A
Alternative 3 – Sheet 4



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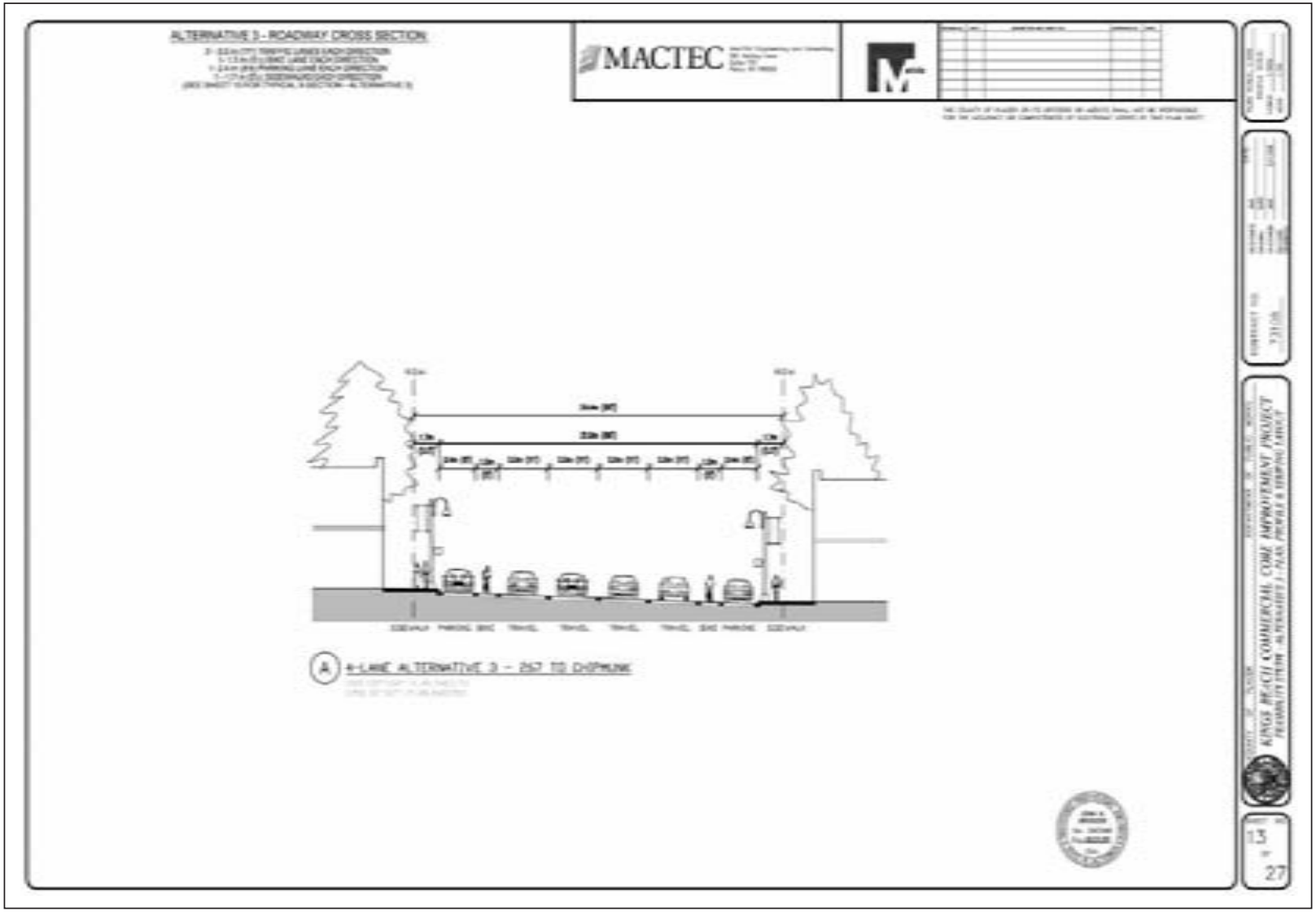
Appendix A
Alternative 3 – Sheet 5



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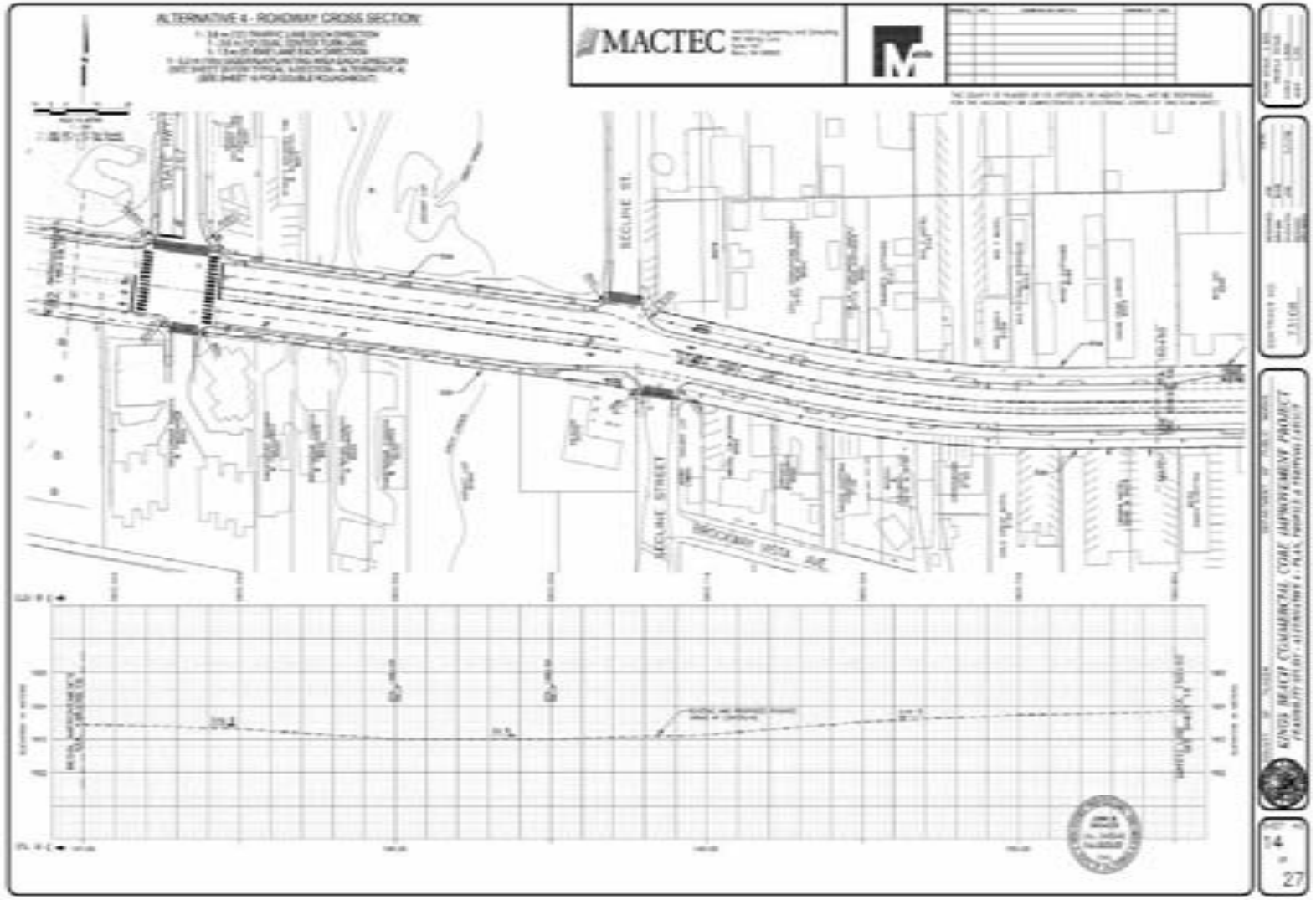
Alternative 3 – Sheet 6



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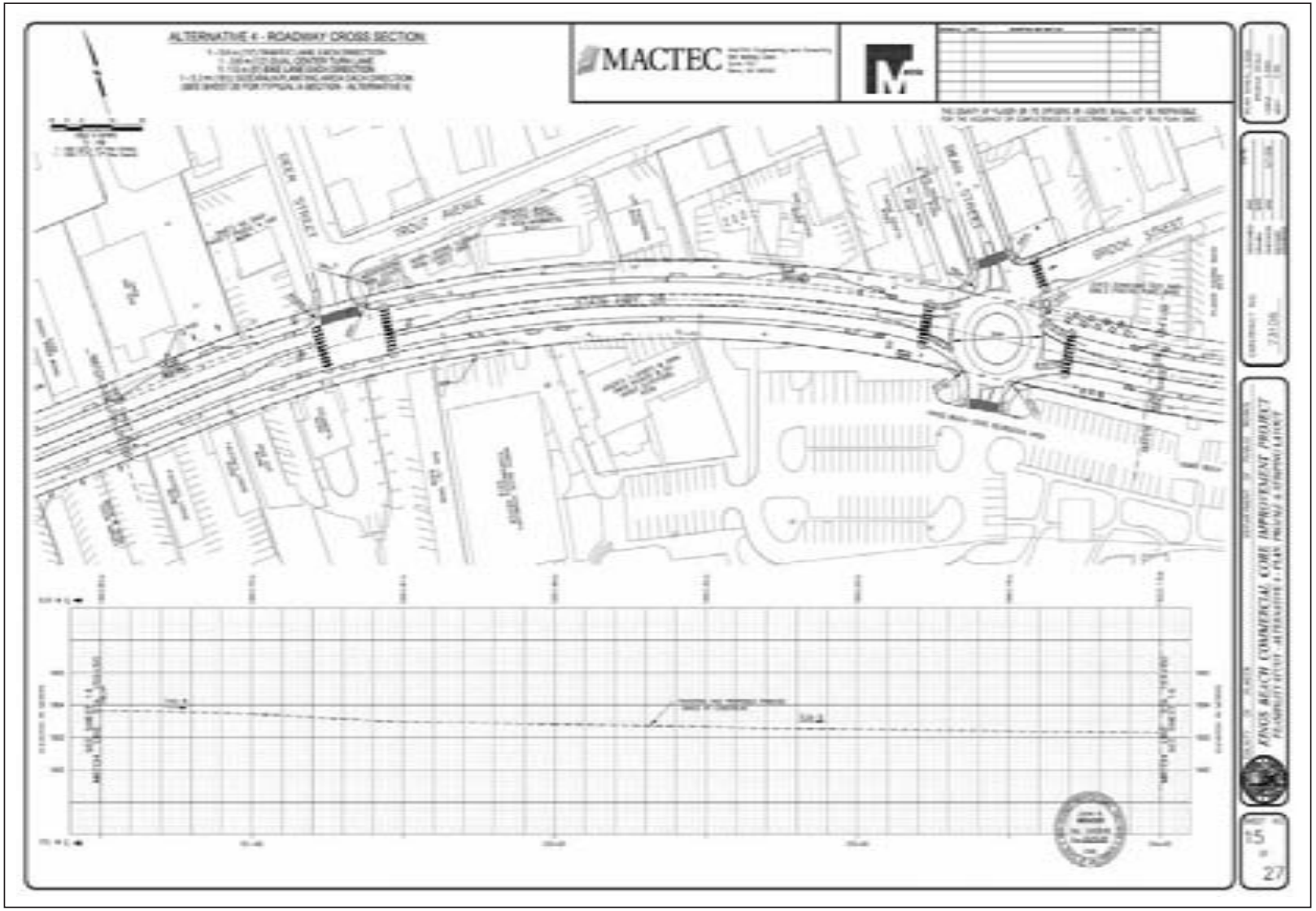
Appendix A
Alternative 4 – Sheet 1



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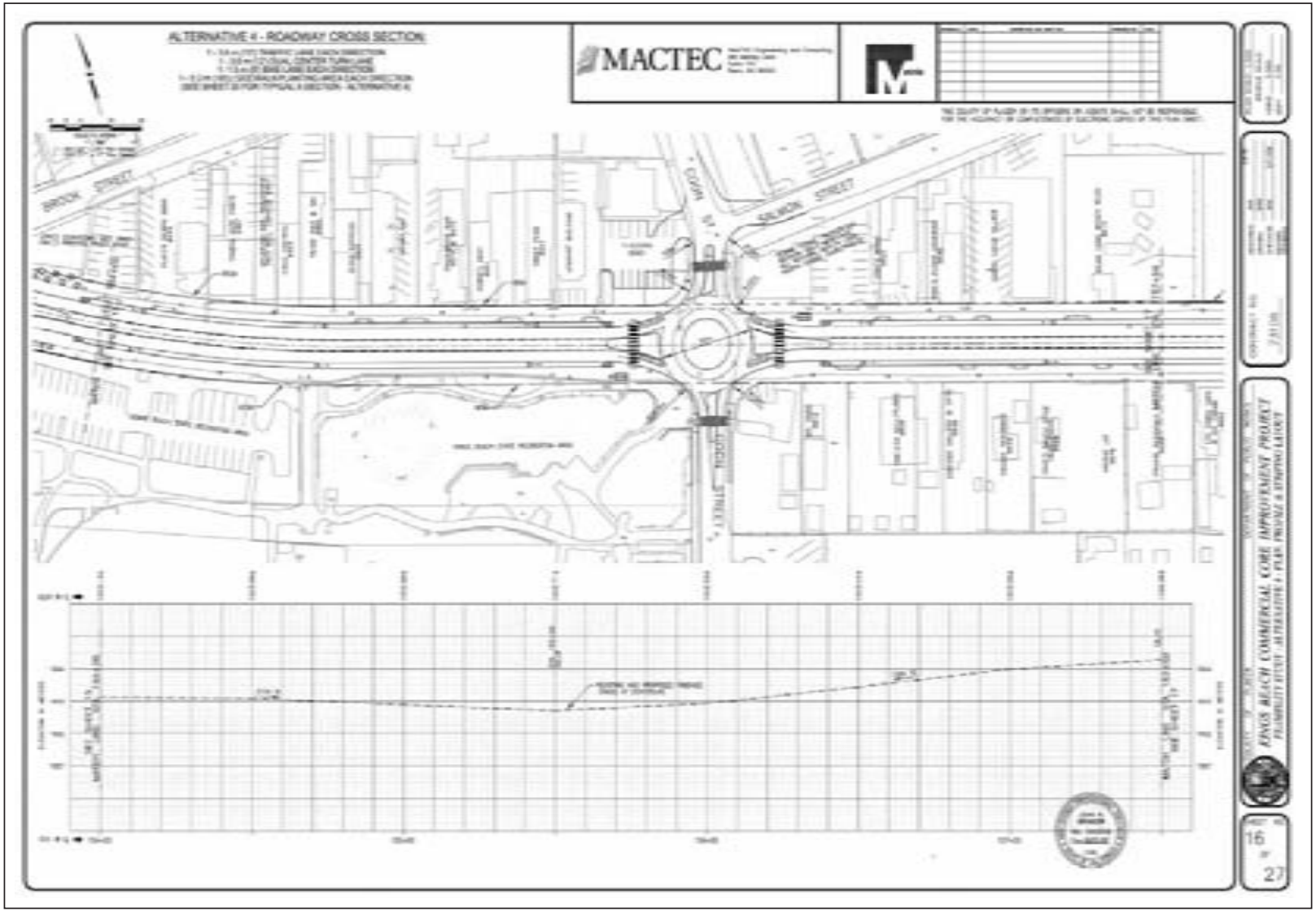
Appendix A
Alternative 4 – Sheet 2



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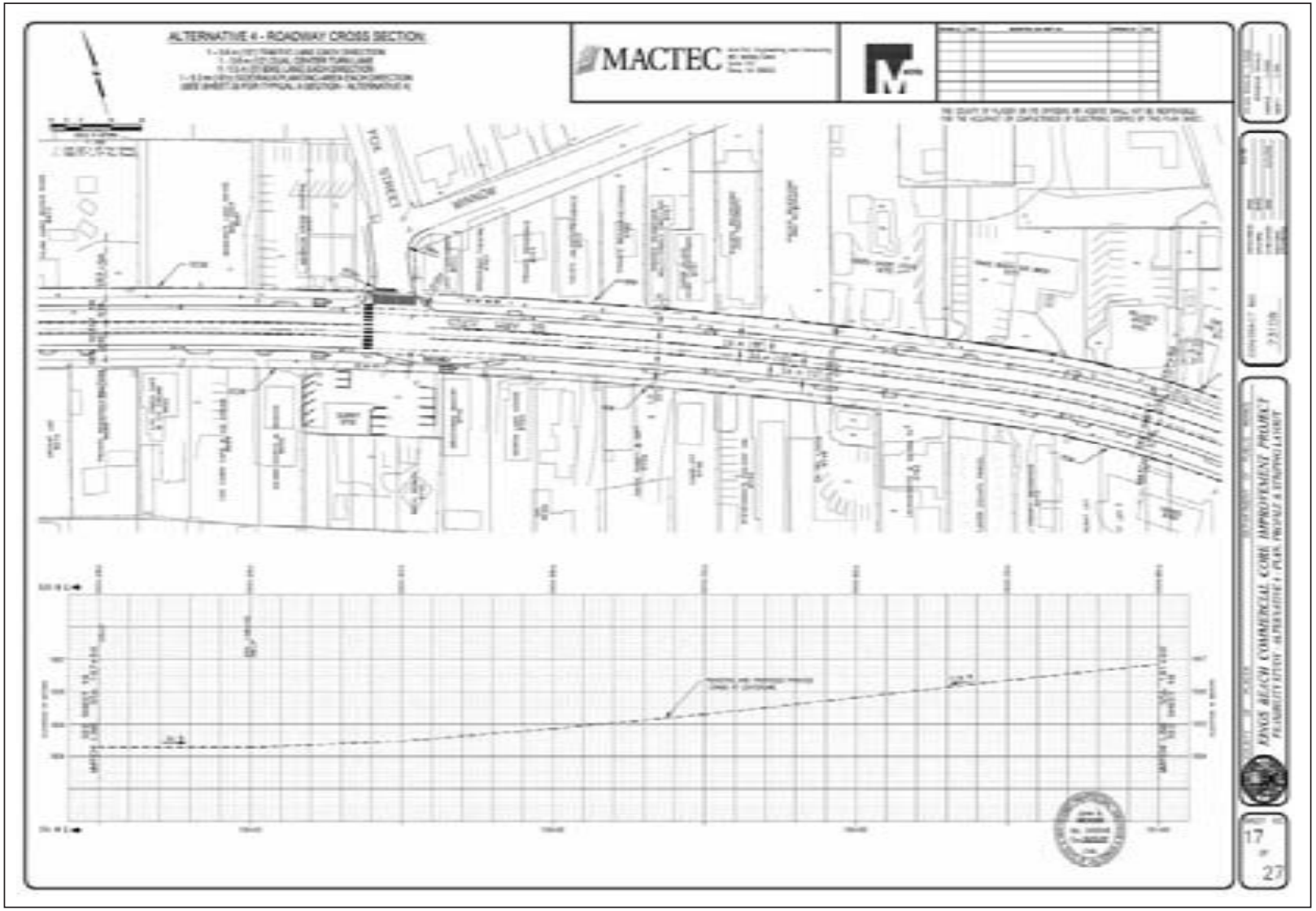
Alternative 4 – Sheet 3



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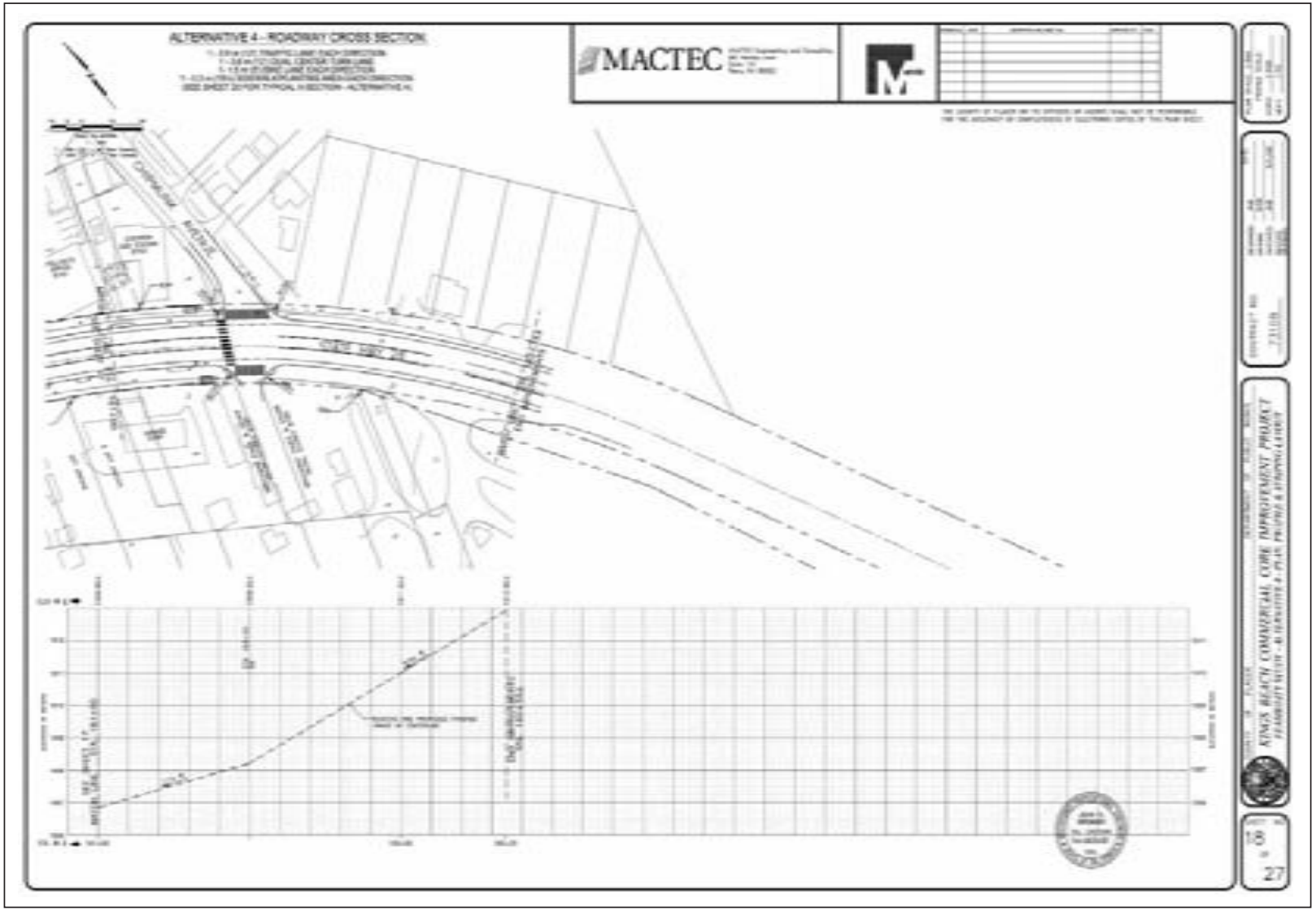
Appendix A
Alternative 4 – Sheet 4



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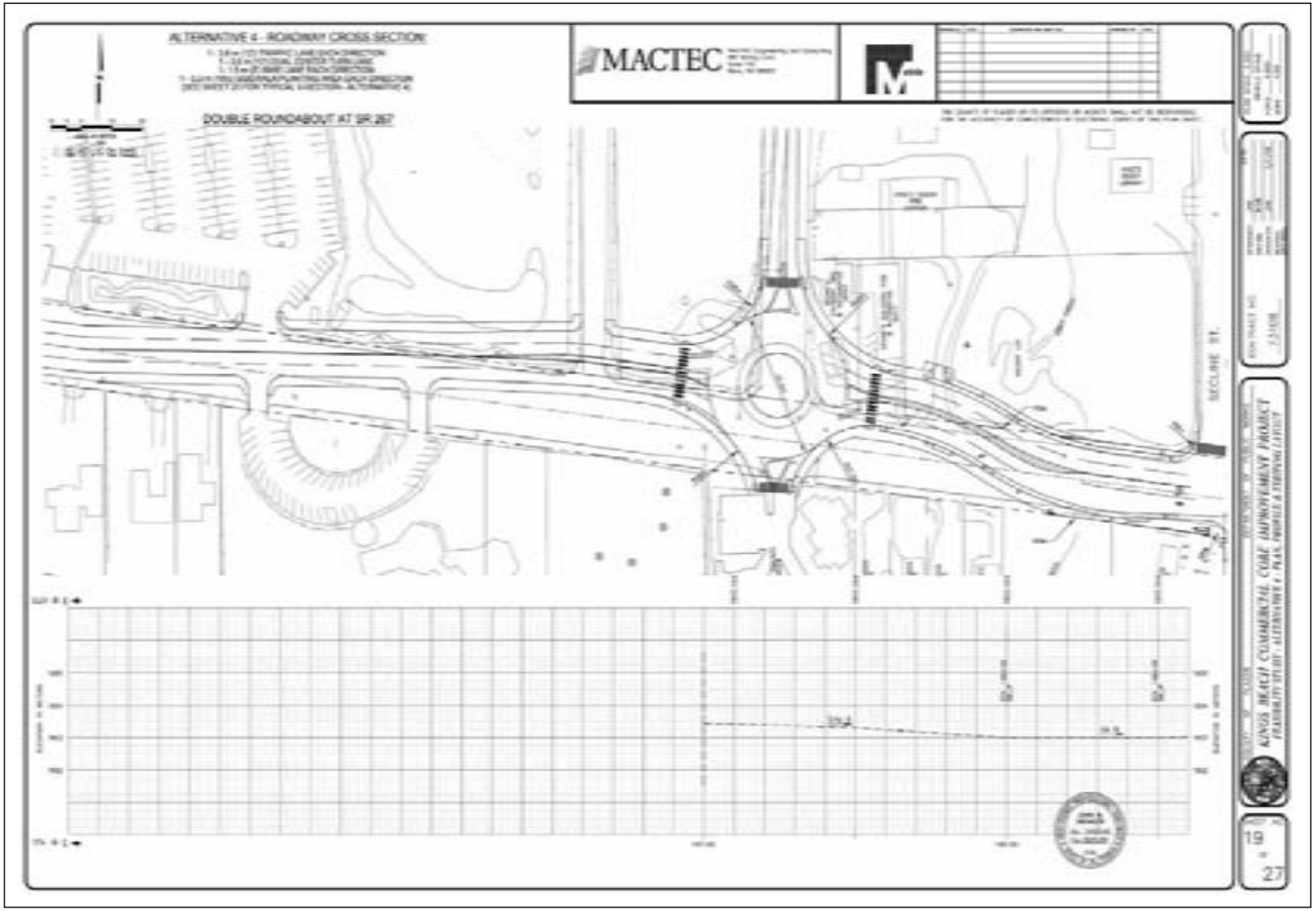
Appendix A
Alternative 4 – Sheet 5



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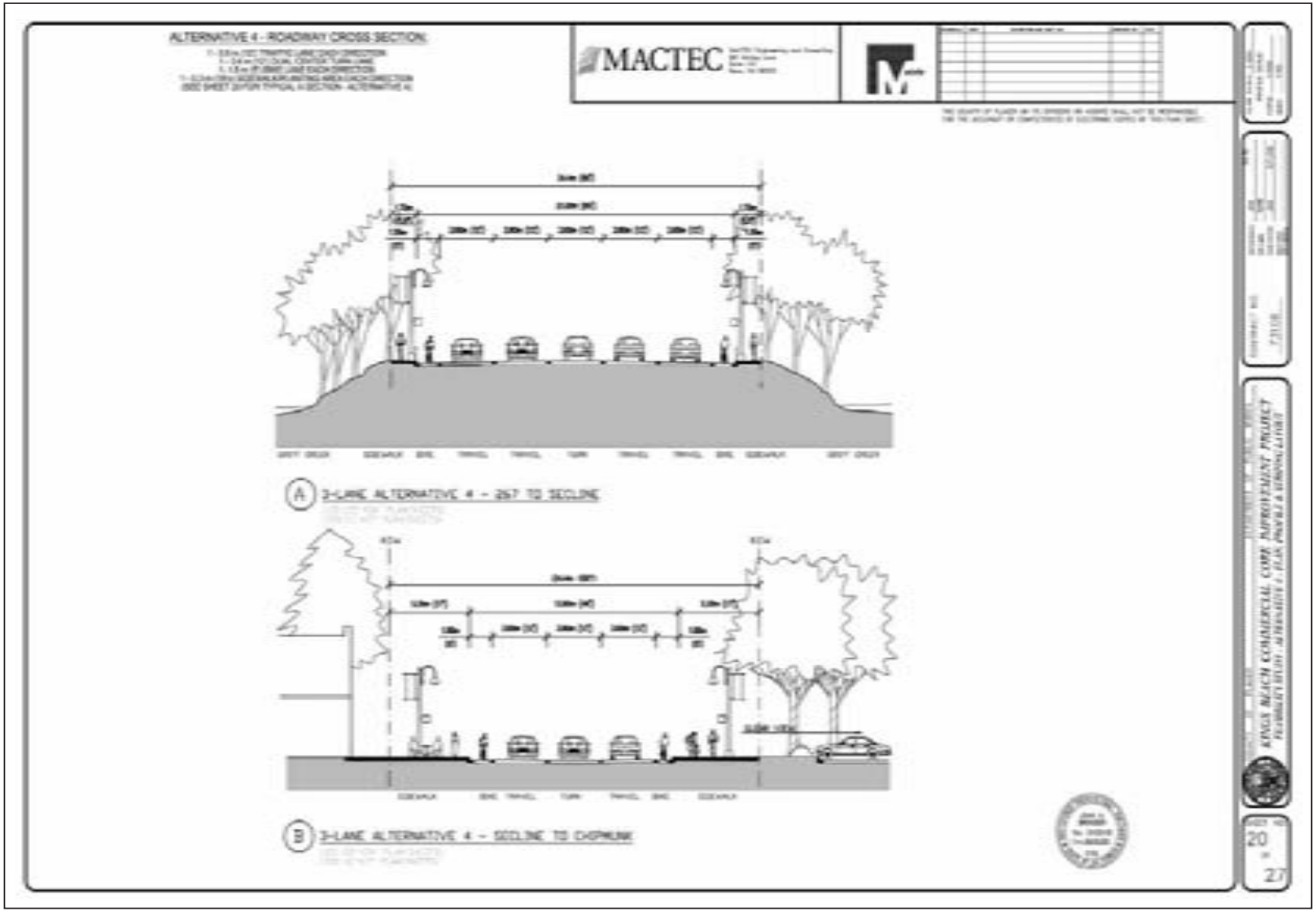
Alternative 4 – Sheet 6



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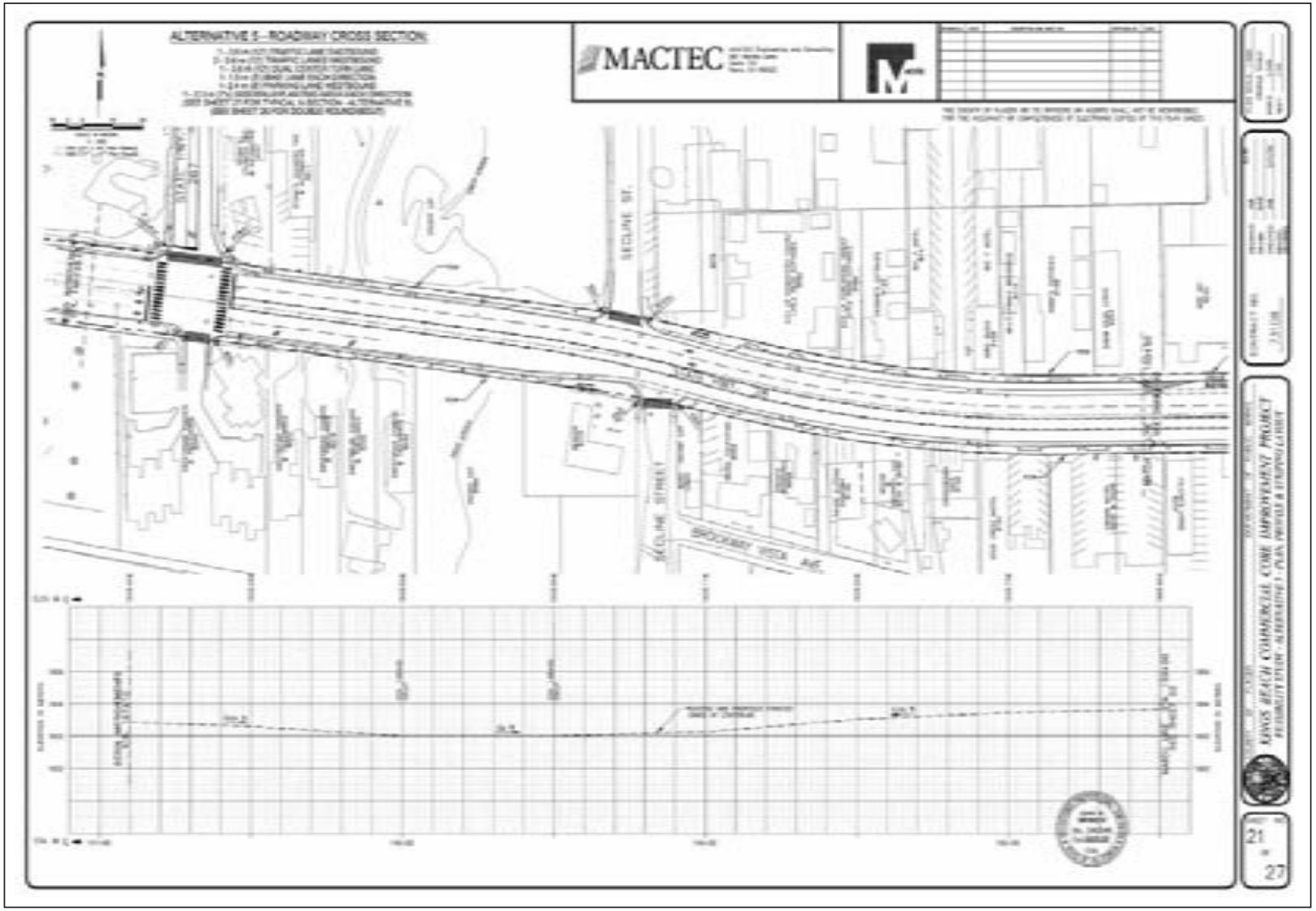
Alternative 4 – Sheet 7



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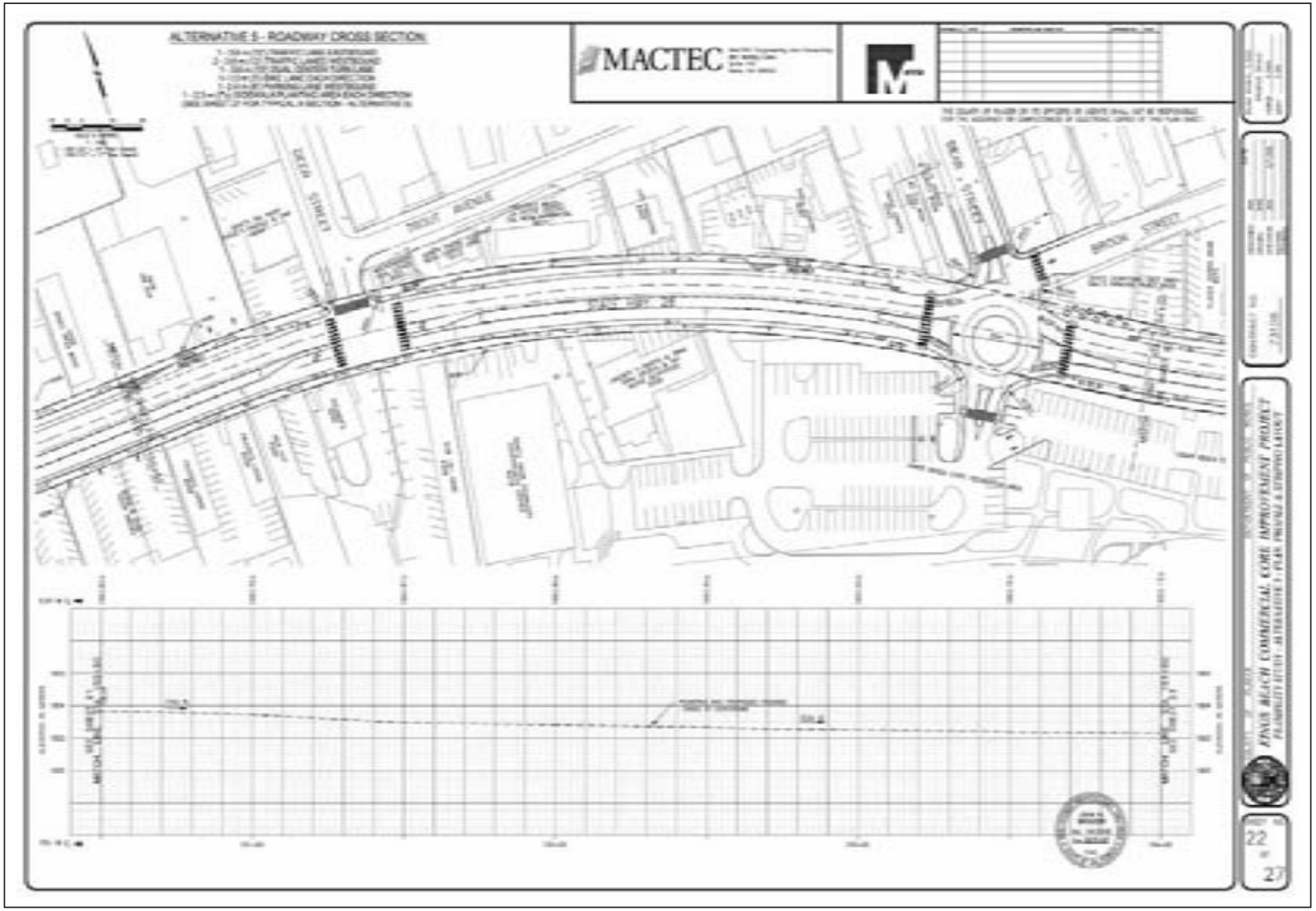
Appendix A
Alternative 5 – Sheet 1



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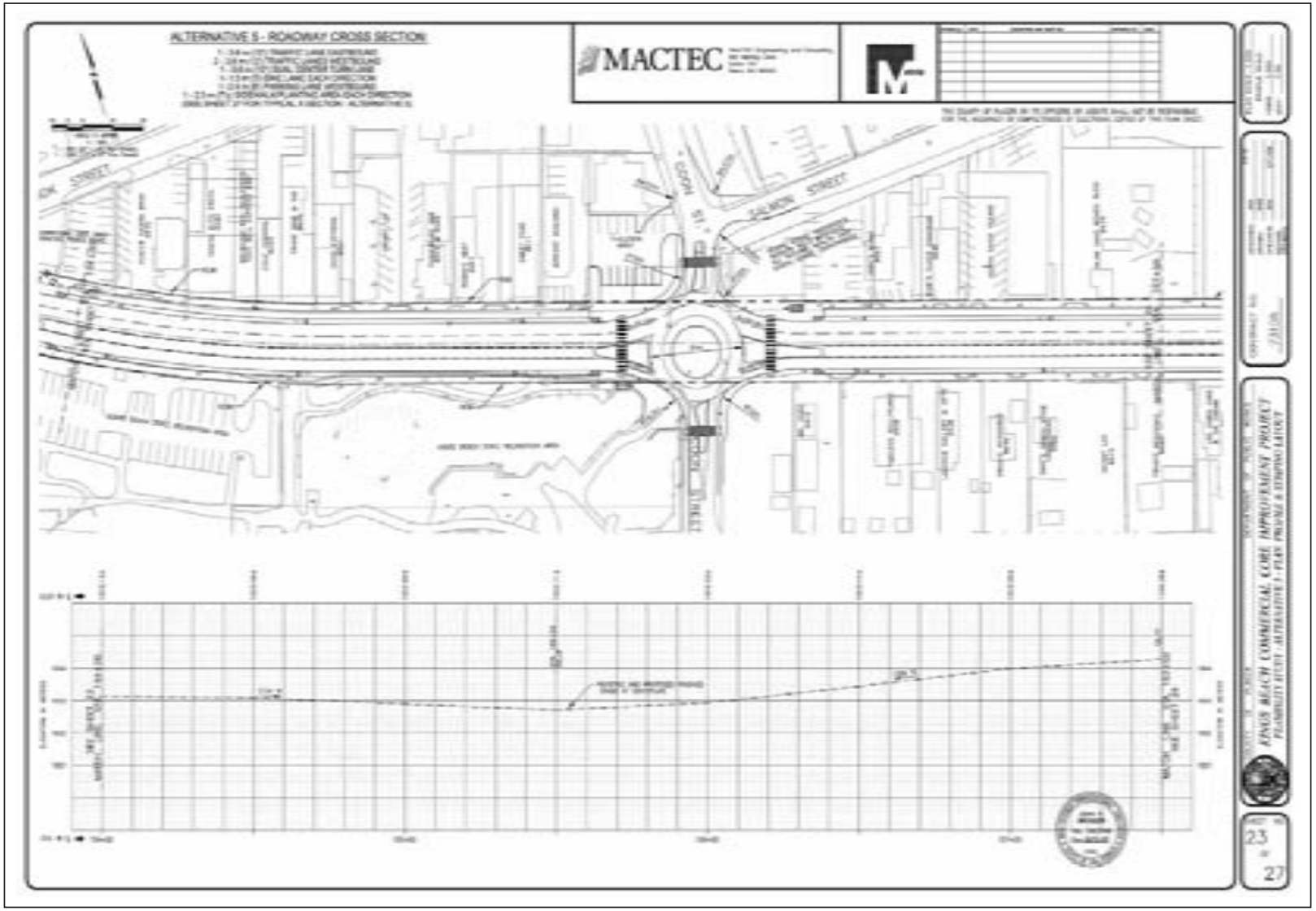
Appendix A
Alternative 5 – Sheet 2



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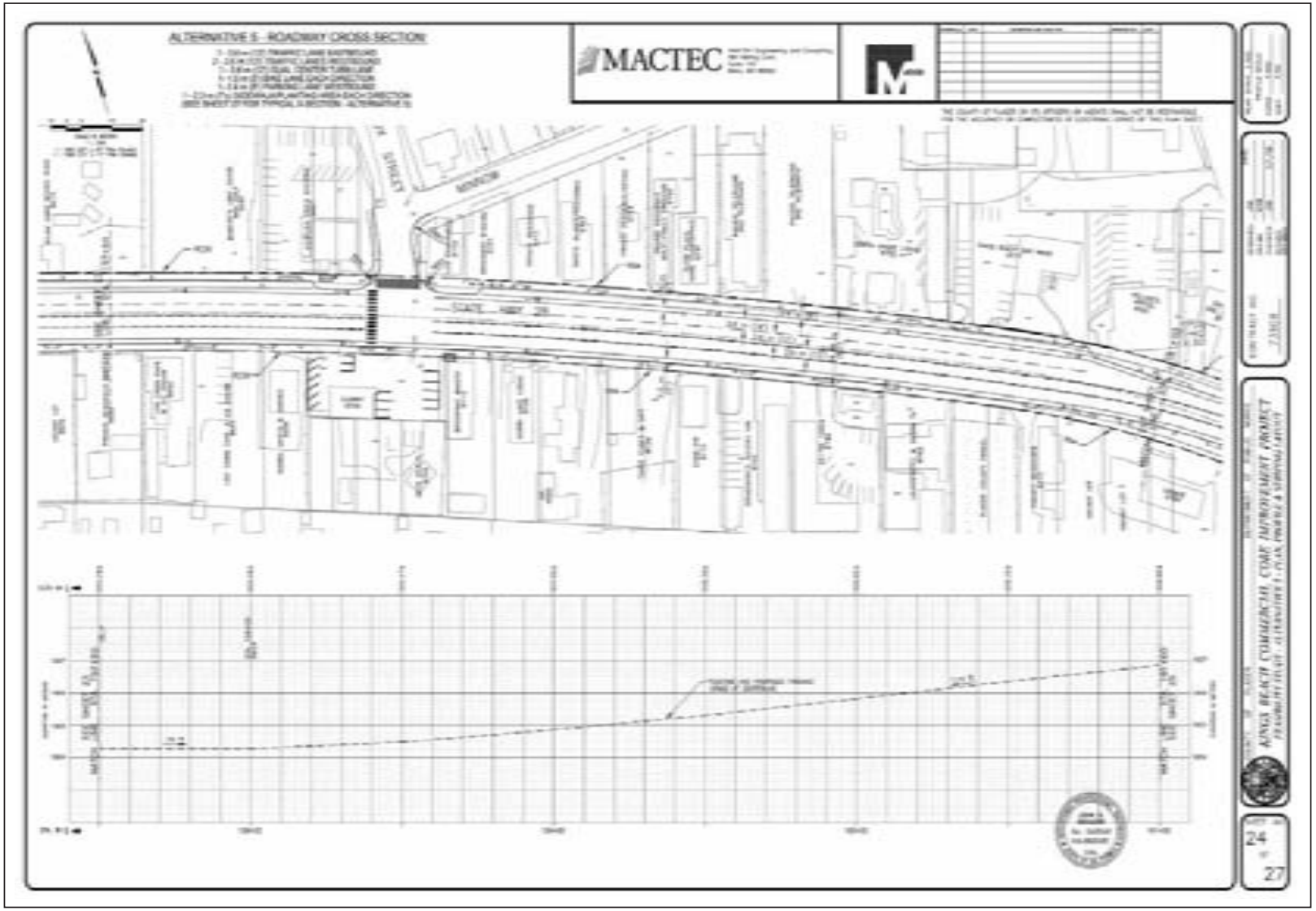
Appendix A
Alternative 5 – Sheet 3



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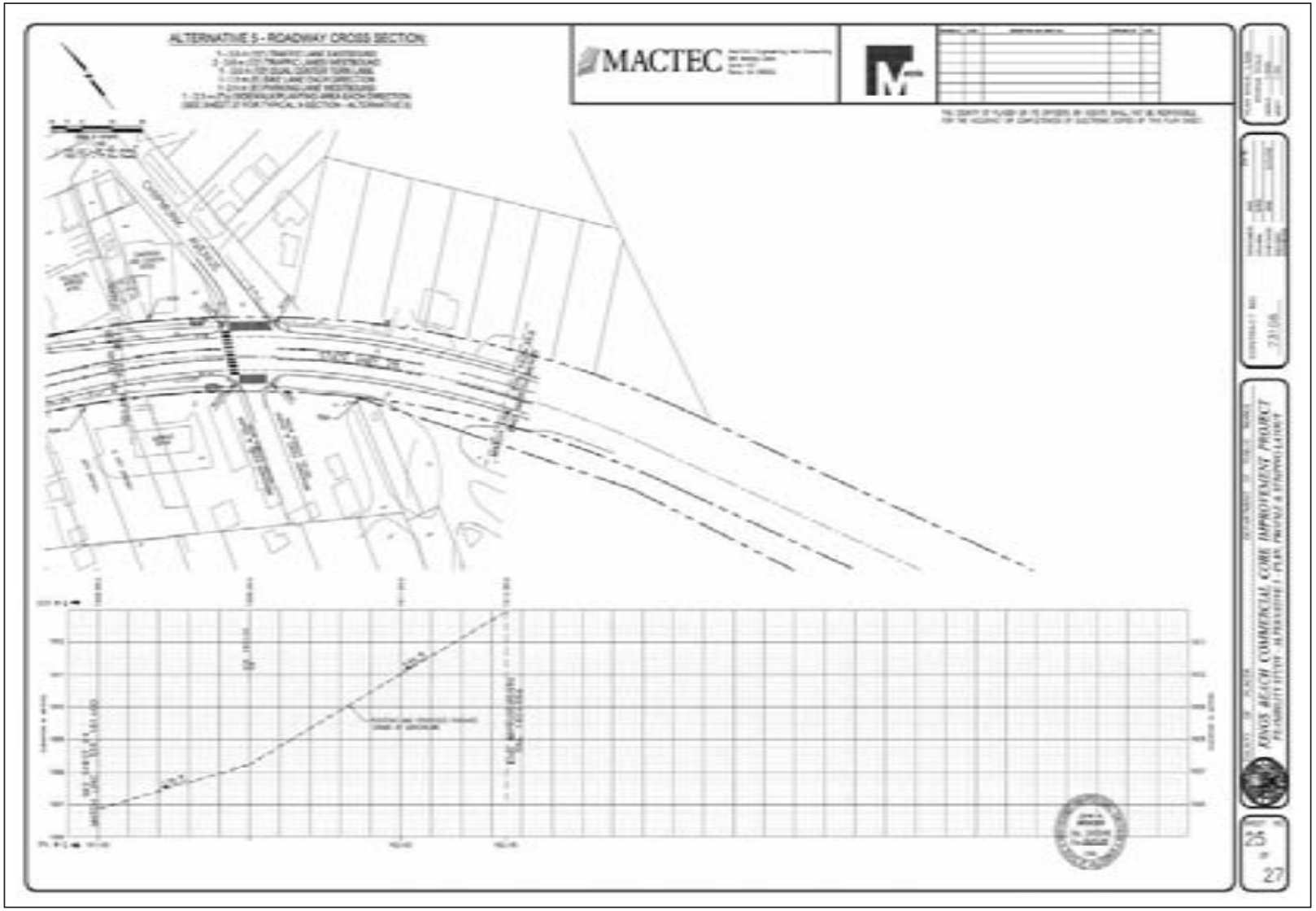
Appendix A
Alternative 5 – Sheet 4



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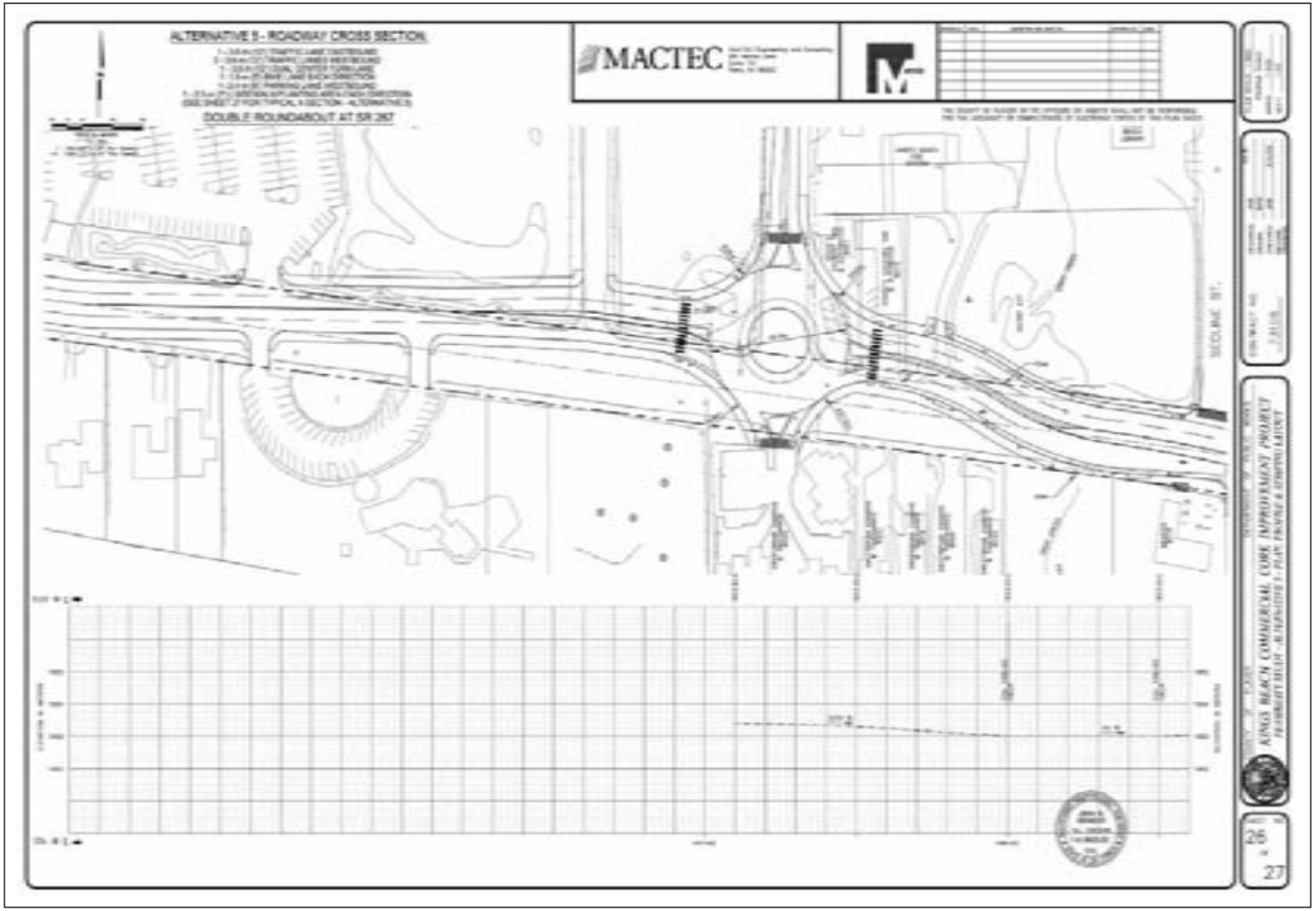
Appendix A
Alternative 5 – Sheet 5



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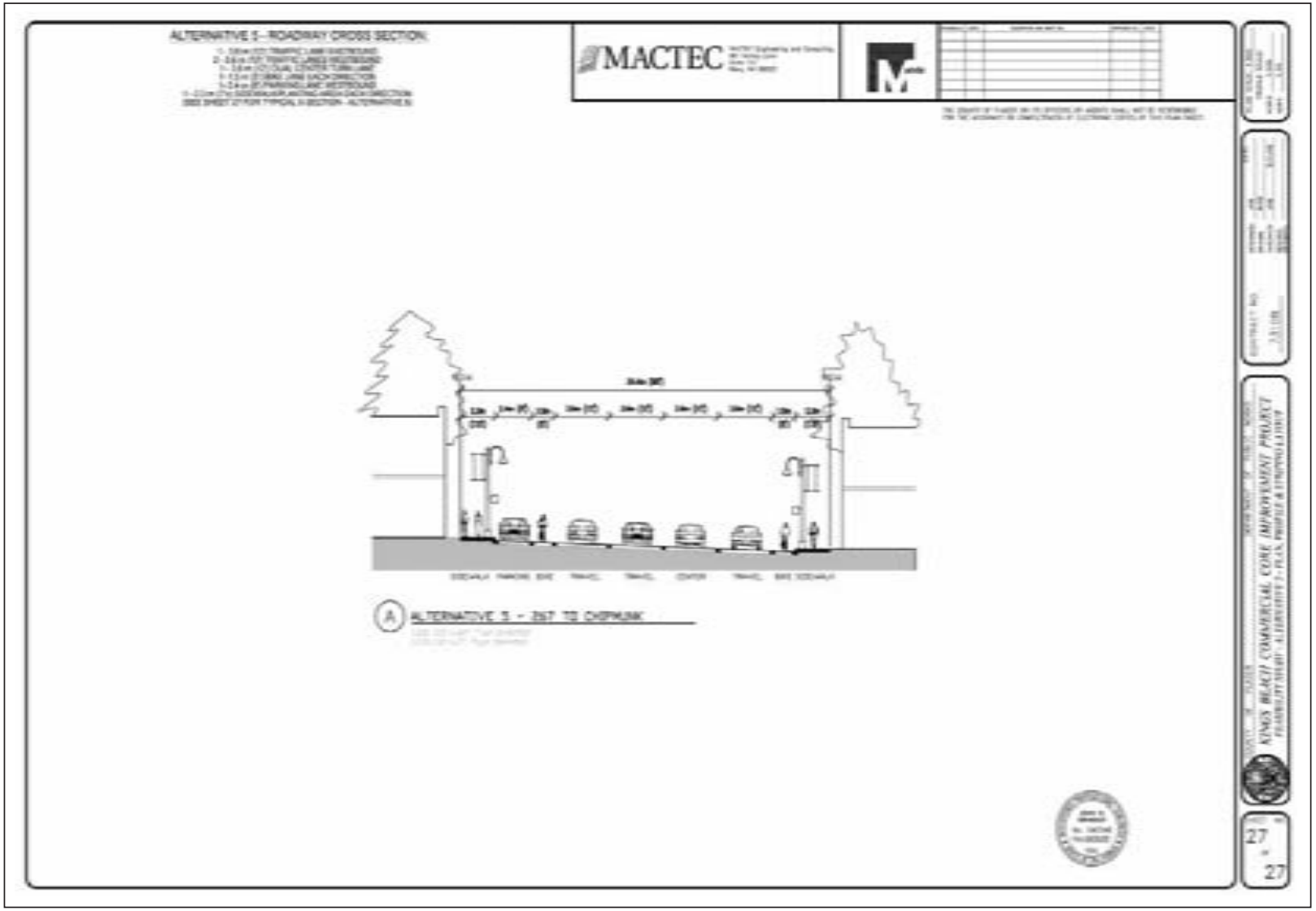
Appendix A
Alternative 5 – Sheet 6



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Appendix A
Alternative 5 – Sheet 7

Appendix B

Visual Simulations

Existing Viewpoint 1. Existing Intersection of Highway 28 and Coon Street.

Visual Simulation 1a. Intersection of Highway 28 and Coon Street – One-Lane Traffic Circle (Alternatives 2 and 4).

Source: Placer County

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Visual Simulation 1b. Intersection of Highway 28 and Coon Street – Two Lanes with Turning Lane (Alternative 5).

Existing Viewpoint 2. Existing Intersection of Highway 267 and Highway 28.

Source: Placer County

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Visual Simulation 2a. Intersection of Highway 267 and Highway 28 – One-Lane Traffic Circle.

Visual Simulation 2b. Intersection of Highway 267 and Highway 28 (Alternatives 2, 3, 4, and 5).

Source: Placer County

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